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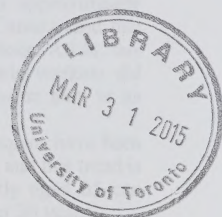
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Wednesday 25 March 2015

Mercredi 25 mars 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Sousa.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I'm pleased to stand today in the House for second reading of Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to implementing innovative retirement savings tools. We're doing this to help ensure that Ontarians are able to enjoy their retirement years. The Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014, would make it possible to offer individuals a new type of retirement savings vehicle. It is one that is voluntary, low-cost and tax assisted. It's called the pooled registered pension plan or PRPP.

If passed, this bill would make possible an important new retirement savings option. It would make it easier for Ontario employees and the self-employed to save for retirement at a low cost. If passed, this would be a key step toward improving retirement income security.

Mr. Speaker, you may know that many of today's workers are not saving enough for tomorrow, and that gap is worsening over time. Today's younger workers are faced with an undersaving challenge: the challenge of saving enough for a secure retirement. Canada's retirement income system worked reasonably well for existing retirees; however, Ontario's workers today face a number of key factors that contribute to the undersaving challenge.

First, workplace pension plan coverage is low. Indeed, in 2012, only 34% of workers in Ontario had a workplace pension. In the private sector, only 28% were benefiting

from membership in a pension plan. The reasons for this vary. Many employers have found that workplace pension plans are costly and difficult to administer. This is particularly so with small and medium-sized businesses. It is also particularly true with defined benefit plans.

Other employers have seen their plans hit by low long-term interest rates and poor investment returns. Some 16% of workers didn't even participate in a workplace pension, but they did contribute—at least some—to an individual or a group Registered Retirement Savings Plan, or RRSP.

As you know, RRSPs have tax benefits as an added incentive. In 2012, however, there was approximately \$730 billion in unused RRSP room in Canada, and that figure includes \$280 billion in Ontario alone. All in, this means that approximately 50% of Ontario workers did not contribute to either a workplace pension plan or an RRSP. That's not good news.

People are living longer. Average lifespans have been increasing in our province for some time, and this trend is likely to continue. Ontario men currently aged 65 can expect to live, on average, close to another 20 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's good news.

Hon. Charles Sousa: That's good for you, Mr. Speaker, I know.

By 2035, they will live, on average, close to 25 more years. For women aged 65, life expectancy is currently 22 more years. This will rise to 25 by 2035.

Those over age 65 are a segment of our population that is growing. Over the next 20 years, the number of seniors in our province will almost double. That means there will be more than four million seniors in Ontario.

Increasing life expectancy, frankly, is a sign of higher living standards and healthier living, which is a good thing. But it also puts pressure on personal savings. It's putting pressure on the capacity of workplace pension plans to ensure lifelong income. That is because retirement can now potentially last for decades.

So why is this government concerned about this undersaving challenge? Not only does it compromise hard-working people being able to relax and enjoy a well-earned retirement; it has the potential, frankly, to compromise our shared values, goals and prosperity as a society as well. If a growing portion of our population face inadequate savings when they retire, they'll spend less in the future. This will reduce future economic growth, which will, in turn, put pressure on our publicly funded services like health care and education. That's why we need to take action now for the future.

Here's a little background on the retirement income system in Canada. There are three key elements. The first element includes publicly funded supplements for seniors. These supplements include Old Age Security, the guaranteed income supplement and provincial top-up programs. These benefits are based on residency and income eligibility criteria. The second element is the Canada Pension Plan, the CPP. It's a mandatory pension plan; a program for the employed and the self-employed. The CPP is funded by employer and employee contributions as well as investment earnings generated by the CPP Investment Board. The third element is a workplace pension plan and other tax-assisted retirement savings. These include, for example, defined benefit pension plans, targeted benefit multi-employer pension plans, defined contribution pension plans, Registered Retirement Savings Plans, deferred profit-sharing plans and, once available, pooled registered pension plans as well.

Experts recommend that people aim to replace 50% to 70% of their pre-retirement earnings to maintain a similar living standard in retirement. Yet, as a society, we are confronted by this undersaving challenge. In fact, analysis by my ministry, the Ministry of Finance, has found that more than 35% of households in Ontario may well be undersaving for retirement. To help with this challenge, in addition to implementing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan in the 2014 budget, we've committed to introducing this legislative framework to allow for pooled registered pension plans.

The challenge we face in Ontario is recognized as well by the federal government in Canada; certainly by the ministry of finance federally, which has recognized that we do have challenges before us. The aging demographics that we're faced with are going to put more pressure—and if we don't look at providing a greater infusion of funding today, there are going to be more requirements on our social assistance programs later.

We know that many who do not have workplace pensions, which includes almost half of Ontarians, cannot survive on CPP alone, which is about \$10,000 on average.

0910

So today, implementing the PRPP, moving forward on this initiative, acts as yet another supplement, another ability for us to provide greater opportunities for Ontarians and for workers to provide for their long-term security.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to share my time with my colleague the member for Etobicoke Centre, who will speak to the House further on details of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members on the opposite side as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to follow Minister Sousa in introducing this piece of legislation. Before I start to speak a little bit about the PRPP, I just want to share a quick story.

When I got elected this past June, I got advice from many people. One of the pieces of advice I got was from

someone in my community who said, "Yvan, never forget that you're here to represent the people of your community, the people of Etobicoke Centre. You should be working hard to improve their quality of life now but also into the future." That, to me, is what this bill is about. It's about securing the quality of life of Ontarians into the future. That's why I'm pleased to stand here in the House and give further details for second reading of Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014.

Many of the folks watching at home may be wondering, what exactly are pooled registered pension plans? As mentioned earlier, PRPPs are a new type of voluntary, tax-assisted individual retirement savings vehicles. As new, low-cost retirement savings vehicles that are professionally managed and portable from one workplace to another, they're intended to make it easier for employees and self-employed folks to save for retirement. PRPPs are vehicles for the self-employed to be able to invest their retirement savings at low cost.

Simply put, PRPPs are savings plans designed to provide retirement income for individuals who pay into them. Individuals have their own individual accounts into which contributions are made. Contributions are locked in and benefits at retirement are based on accumulated contributions and investment returns. Similar to other tax-assisted savings vehicles such as RRSPs, which many people are familiar with, individuals would not pay income tax on their PRPP contributions and investment returns until they withdraw their funds.

The thing is that PRPPs differ slightly from RRSPs in a number of important respects, and I'd like to highlight what those are. Individuals' accounts are, first of all, pooled for investment purposes—that is different. Contributions are locked in until an individual reaches retirement age. The third thing is, legislation requires that PRPPs be provided at low cost and administrators are held to a higher legal standard of care. Similar to registered pension plan contributions, employer PRPP contributions are tax-deductible, which is of great benefit both to the employee and to the employer who is making those contributions. Those contributions are not subject to employer health tax, employment insurance premiums, Canada Pension Plan contributions or workers' compensation premiums.

What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that more Ontarians who are employees or self-employed will have access to another voluntary savings vehicle.

After two years of federal-provincial-territorial collaboration in the development and design of PRPPs, the federal government implemented PRPPs for sectors under federal jurisdiction, such as employees in the banking, interprovincial transportation and communication sectors. The federal legislation also applies to people employed or self-employed in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

The federal Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, or PRPP Act, and associated regulations came into force in December 2012. The federal PRPP Act enables corporations such as banks and insurance companies to be the

administrators of PRPPs, and sets out rules for establishing and administering those PRPPs.

Let me touch briefly on some of the key characteristics of the federal PRPP legislation.

First of all, licensing and registration requirements: Administrators would be required to obtain a licence and to register PRPPs before making them available to employers and individuals.

Secondly, administrator duties: Administrators would have a fiduciary duty to plan members.

Thirdly, voluntary participation by employers: Employers would choose whether to offer their employees a PRPP as a retirement savings tool. Again, this is giving options to employers to help contribute to the retirement savings of their employees.

Automatic enrolment of employees: Where an employer elects to offer a PRPP, enrolment of employees would be automatic unless an employee chooses to opt out within a 60-day period. So employees are offered the PRPP by employers who choose to do so, but again have the option of opting out if they don't see it as being to their individual benefit. So there's a lot of flexibility there.

Portability between workplaces: Employees would be able to transfer their PRPP assets to a new workplace PRPP, allowing them to easily consolidate their retirement savings account; again, offering employees flexibility with their retirement savings.

In terms of setting contribution rates, PRPP members' contribution rates would be determined by the administrator.

Voluntary contributions by employers: The employer would determine whether or not to contribute to their employees' PRPPs; again, offering the employer flexibility, just as we're offering the employee flexibility.

Locked-in contributions: An individual would not be able to access his or her PRPP retirement savings, subject to certain prescribed exceptions, until the age of 55.

Low cost: PRPPs provide professional investment management at a low cost to plan members by pooling the funds of all individual accounts for investment purposes, as well as limiting the investment options provided to plan members. Again, this facilitates a low-cost plan and therefore greater returns for plan members.

It's easy to offer. PRPPs involve fewer administrative responsibilities for employers than a traditional pension plan. Again, keeping administration down and keeping the cost down maximizes returns for employees, and therefore retirement savings.

Now, let me clarify, Mr. Speaker: Legislation must be passed by each province before PRPPs can be made available to individuals employed in provincially regulated sectors and self-employed individuals working in the provinces. As a result, PRPPs will not be available to the majority of Ontarians until legislation is passed by this House and proclaimed in force, and once supporting regulations have been made.

The purpose of the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014, which we're speaking about today, is to pro-

vide a legal framework for the establishment and administration of PRPPs in Ontario to benefit employees and self-employed folks in our province. It would apply to individuals employed in provincially regulated employment, to the self-employed in Ontario, as well as to individuals employed in federally regulated industries in Ontario whose employers do not offer PRPPs. As someone who has been self-employed and who has run my own business, I can see this is something that would be highly beneficial to me and to many folks across Ontario who don't have as many savings options for retirement as those who are employed and are offered plans by their employers.

Given the desire to harmonize PRPPs across the country, the proposed legislation adopts many of the key features of the federal PRPP legislative framework that I was referring to earlier. To date, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have passed legislation establishing PRPP frameworks that largely mirror the federal government's model. Consistent with the approach taken by other provinces, Bill 57, which we're talking about today, largely adopts the federal framework, including the key features of the federal model that I discussed earlier.

But this proposed legislation includes Ontario-specific features as well, where provincial law and/or processes are required to apply, or where additional provisions are required for added clarity or consistency with Ontario's minimum pension standards legislation. For example, valuation and division of a member's PRPP funds on marriage or spousal relationship breakdown would be consistent with Ontario's Family Law Act and the Pension Benefits Act, as would the definition of "spouse." This is an example.

In practice, we might expect PRPPs to work as follows—I want to walk through this, because I think that a lot of folks aren't familiar with PRPPs and I'd like to talk just a little bit about how this might work in practice. Employers who choose to offer PRPPs to their employees would be responsible for selecting and entering into a contract with a third-party PRPP administrator, such as a bank or insurance company, that is qualified to provide the service. The administrator would then be responsible for managing the PRPP investments that are made by employers and employees, and for communicating with plan members on matters related to their PRPP.

If an employer chooses to offer a PRPP, an employee would be automatically enrolled in it, but the employee, as I mentioned earlier, can choose to opt out. So, again, it's a program that is flexible to employers and flexible to employees. Those who wish to participate can do so, but those who do not wish to do so do not have to.

Employee contributions to the PRPP would be made through automatic paycheque deductions. The employer would be required to deduct and remit the employee contributions to the administrator. Again, it's a relatively straightforward process; something that many employers are doing already and that employees are accustomed to

having done. It's seamless, and something that would be relatively easy to implement and easy for employees as well.

Individuals who do not participate in the workplace PRPP, such as self-employed individuals, for example, would be able to enrol themselves in a PRPP of their choice. In this case, an individual would contact the PRPP administrator to join a plan, and would make contributions, again, through an automatic payment plan with their financial institution, like so many of us do on a daily basis with our financial institutions, with our banks, to make payments and make savings contributions.

0920

Again, as someone who has been self-employed and who did look at savings options, I have to say that there were a limited number of savings options here. I'm excited about this piece of legislation because I know there are a lot of folks out there in Ontario who are self-employed; in fact, that number is growing. Offering this provides them with an option that is much needed to address some of the issues that Minister Sousa talked about in terms of addressing the retirement savings gap.

Each administrator would be responsible for designing its own PRPP. A plan administrator could choose to offer one or multiple PRPPs, depending on the marketing strategy and whether it sought to tailor its PRPP for specific employers. Administrators would have the option of including different investment options to reflect the varying risk profile of the people who are contributing, of its members. A default option would be applied to members who did not make a choice or an investment option within a specific time frame. Again, this is for ease of implementation and for the convenience of contributors.

In order to administer a PRPP, a corporation would be first required to obtain a licence to operate as a PRPP administrator. To do so, the corporation would need to satisfy conditions that will be set out in regulations; again, making sure that the highest standards are met in the administration of PRPPs.

Our government recognizes that increasing retirement savings in the province is a complex challenge that requires a multi-faceted approach. Establishing pooled registered pension plans is just one step in our plan which will encourage investment in voluntary retirement savings tools.

In the last few months I've had many conversations with people in my community who talked about the retirement savings gap, and many people acknowledge that retirement savings gap. In fact, I have a community with one of the largest percentages of seniors in the country. I meet with many seniors who have been the beneficiaries of savings plans or have put money away, but I also have met many seniors who struggle to make ends meet. This is one tool in the tool kit that we're introducing to make sure that the people who could be putting aside money today—people like myself—do so, so that when we are seniors we can provide for that quality of life that we enjoy today and that we deserve.

When I started speaking, I started by sharing the advice that I got from my constituent who talked about the

fact that I should be here to ensure that we're improving the quality of life of people today but also into the future. This bill, to me, is an important component of doing just that: of helping to secure the prosperity of Ontarians into the future. That's why I ask the members of this assembly to support this Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much for the opportunity to weigh in on this, Speaker. I'm actually quite pleased to hear this discussion on a PRPP, the pooled registered pension plan, as opposed to the ORPP, the Ontario registered pension plan, that the government has been touting all along. One of these is a red herring of sorts, and I can only imagine why they're trying to promote two conflicting pension plans at the same time. One would lead to speculate that the ORPP is nothing more than their continued battle with the federal government and it's some kind of a game that's being played with the taxpayers' and ratepayers' emotions. Sadly, that's all I can imagine that the whole Ontario registered pension plan program announcement is all about.

This PRPP, the pooled registered pension plan, is something that our members have been speaking about—Julia, if I knew your riding I would mention it.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York—Simcoe.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —that our member from York—Simcoe has been touting for quite some years now. I am very eager to hear the member speak very shortly for a very considerable amount of time to tell the public our party's interpretation of the pooled registered pension plan.

Again, I believe this conflicts quite drastically with the ORPP, the Ontario registered pension plan, and I'm looking forward to carrying on the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You know, Speaker, we tend to be confused here on this side of the House as well. You've got the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that you brought forward; now you've got this one. There are so many options right now for pension plans. Constituents, people who invest in their retirement, need education and awareness. Throwing this into the mix is probably going to give people all kinds of choices, but the fact is, what are the benefits; what are the pros and cons to all this?

I talk to a lot of people with regard to contributions to financing for their retirement. It's a very confusing process. Bringing this into the whole equation—I would hope that, should this carry on and pass through the House, there's going to be some real education.

We have questions about how this arrangement is actually going to affect the banks and insurance companies, the management piece. Is that where it's going to? Is that the direction this particular pooled registered pension plan is going, and who that benefits, giving the banks and the insurance companies authority to do that?

So there are questions about this bill. We would like to know about the effectiveness of this bill and how it's actually going to translate into helping people with retirement pension plans.

The other thing, Speaker, is, the Minister of Finance talked about how very few people plan for their retirement, and there are many reasons for that. Some of them have precarious work; they have low-income jobs. There are also the bills of everyday life. I had a constituent, a senior, just recently contact our office. He was paying \$1,800 a month for a hydro bill. It's outrageous—and this is a senior trying to make ends meet. He planned for his retirement, but if we don't have affordability in everyday life, it doesn't matter how much we save; it's going to be taxing on everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Good morning, Speaker. I'm going to take a different slant on this pension plan. I have two girls who are 46 and 42. Neither of them has a pension through their work. They will not be able to access this pension, I don't believe—I hope that they will. I won't be around to find out. But as I went door to door, very clearly the seniors were concerned about their children and grandchildren, hoping that they would have a better pension to live on when they become seniors.

I believe that we are doing this for the children and grandchildren of the future. It's very important that we do this. People are living longer, and that's a good thing. However, they need more money to live, and I believe that this is the way to go. Many people do not have registered pension plans to contribute to anymore; there are fewer and fewer companies that offer them. Because my girls are hard-working Ontario citizens, I believe that people like them deserve to have a good retirement with a high quality of life. This goes also for my grandchildren.

When I grew up, I said I was going to be a teacher in grade 9; I became a teacher. There were three choices, when I was growing up, of what you could be, as a woman. Things have changed a lot. Kids now move from job to job, from career to career. They are much better at taking risks than my generation was. So I believe that there will be very few of them who will have pension plans where they work. The great idea is that these are transferrable, and I hope that we do get more from the CPP, but I am hoping that this is an answer for our seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to rise, and I'm glad to see this bill, which was proposed and first put on the table by our member from York-Simcoe, is being brought forward, because it is an important bill. It allows them to move ahead with the federal bill that's there and allows them to provide something—it allows employers and employees to opt in, and it's also portable, which is important as people move from job to job.

0930

I hear the talk too about some of their other plans. The registered plan—I think that's a foolhardy plan, because

it's a mandatory plan that really is on the backs of some of our small businesses that can't afford it. This is a much more opportune way of doing things.

Some of the red herrings I've heard: The RRSP room—if you look at it, there are many people who are very well set up for retirement who don't contribute fully to their RRSP because for tax implications it doesn't make sense. So the large number that's sitting there I think is a number that maybe misleads, really, the need for some of our pension plans, especially the registered retirement one.

Also, I too see our seniors and how they are concerned about their grandchildren and children, because they see the taxes and the payroll taxes, and the costs that have gone up under this government. What used to be a good pension just a few years ago no longer is enough to pay for your hydro bill, to pay for the increased cost of living in this province. That is the real concern. Are they going to have the money to pay off the debt of everybody who is born in this province? We're talking over \$20,000 of debt for every new child who enters the world, and under this government it will soon be \$30,000. That is something that you're going to have to have money for in retirement, to pay back part of this debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke Centre has two minutes—the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member from Nipissing, the member from London-Fanshawe, the member from Barrie and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry as well.

Let's be clear: We are providing a supplementary plan. In the 2013 budget that was introduced, we de-linked the notion of having CPP enhancement alongside PRPPs, recognizing that we want to provide greater opportunity of choice and deliverable services for those companies that want lower-cost opportunities. Certainly, the PRPP is a much lower-cost delivery system that we want people to try to take advantage of.

We're working closely with other provinces and the federal government as well. In fact, some of the other provinces are starting to proceed further, as is Ontario, on this very issue, because it's critical for us to have some of the portability features that come from a PRPP to be able to be utilized. As a worker would migrate to and from various provinces, they would then be able to also transfer their PRPPs alongside.

The members opposite who claim that this is somehow in conflict or is diluting the challenge before us with respect to the savings challenge and the pressure that's going to be upon us in the years to come are putting their heads in the sand, Mr. Speaker. They're not looking forward, they're look behind. Because you've got to realize that the demographic changes that are ahead of us are going to be put under great pressures. The fact that there are unused programs right now—50% of Ontarians don't take advantage of, or are unable to take advantage of, a workplace pension. What we're offering is a supplement-

ary plan, yet another vehicle to enable them to have greater choice. That's what we're doing here today. I appreciate that all of us need to work together for the benefit of our young workers who are going to be most susceptible to this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and join in the debate on the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. When I learned of the government's intention to pass this act, I had two reactions. My first reaction was that I was both surprised and pleased. I've been the critic for retirement security for some time, and have been advocating that Ontario allow PRPPs for some time as well. As a matter of fact, in April 2013 I introduced Bill 50, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, requiring the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill in the assembly to allow for pooled registered pension plans. Of course, in the budget of that year, in fact, that was indicated. So two years later and I'm getting my wish. I'm delighted; I'd actually like the Liberals to grant me a few more, but I'm very pleased to have this today for us to debate.

I think PRPPs are indeed good and necessary. Obviously, the federal government realized this some time back and passed the legislation that would allow the provinces to implement PRPPs, establishing the minimum standards that all federal PRPPs would have and that PRPP administrators must meet. Each province is responsible for enacting its own PRPP enabling legislation. Quebec has already launched its version of voluntary retirement savings plans. British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan have also passed legislation. So we're catching up here in doing this.

I'd like to thank the federal government for taking the lead on PRPPs and passing legislation allowing provinces to offer this new savings vehicle. If you look at the bill itself, you will see that much of it is related to hooking into the federal legislation in order to provide this new savings vehicle. I'd also like to thank our provincial government for recognizing the value in PRPPs and co-operating with the federal government on this issue. It is obviously something we all agree on how important it is that Canadians not only save for retirement, but also have a choice in how they are saving.

The federal Conservative government has been a leader when it comes to offering Canadians choice with their retirement savings. Not only have they introduced legislation for PRPPs, but also the tax-free savings accounts that have proven to be popular and useful savings vehicles. I applaud both governments on their foresight in allowing Canadians to save their money as they wish.

I think that it's really important in the world of acronyms to take a few moments to explain what the "pooling" refers to and what the "registered" is, because obviously "pension plan" is the other part of the acronym.

The notion of pooled is one that has gained greater and greater popularity and greater understanding and accept-

ance as people realize the complexity of making investments, and the fact that there are many places where the pension plans are, in fact, pooled. But they are pooled for that particular group that they are talking about or that are included. The pooling, then, reduces the cost. Obviously, if you are phoning or emailing or however you're communicating with a financial adviser on a one-on-one basis, that's going to be much more expensive than a company that is set up to accept the files, the accounts of hundreds of thousands of people. One press of a button has it all taken care of in a pooled setting. So the notion of pooled, I think, is something that people need to understand, and why it's to their advantage to do that.

The second is that it's registered. What does that mean? It means that your name is on a little pot of a growing amount of savings. While it's part of the pooled, there's your name on your savings, and I think that's extremely important.

The other principle that distinguishes this from government Bill 56 is that it's voluntary. I think it should be emphasized that this proposal is a voluntary undertaking by the employee and the employer. It's interesting—I'm going to digress for just a moment and come back to that—in Quebec, where I mentioned this has already taken place, nearly nine small business owners out of 10 favour the government phasing in voluntary retirement savings. We see that those who have gone before us have picked up a tremendous element of support.

0940

We regard PRPPs as an essential addition to retirement saving options. They are similar to a defined contribution plan; however, employer contributions, as was stated, are voluntary. A PRPP pools contributions together to achieve lower investment management and administration costs, and in that way you can see that the bigger the pool, the more efficient the administration can be and the lower the costs will be for that administration. It also means that as that pool is larger, it offers greater investment opportunities for the actual pooling. That is, again, a very important concept, because the smaller the group, the harder it is, first of all, to keep those costs of administration down and efficient, and it also means there is less opportunity for them to be in the marketplace of investment.

Probably two of the most valued demonstrations of that are with CPP, out on the world stage, able to take a significant amount of money. We're looking at—I've forgotten, but in the neighbourhood of \$150 billion. I don't think we're going to have that in a pooled registered pension plan, but the greater the pool, the greater the opportunity that can be made on behalf of the registered owners of that to be in that bigger investment market.

PRPPs, as others have explained, are a vehicle for both employers and the self-employed person. Self-employed people have always had a certain difficulty in establishing something that they could afford. The PRPP supplier takes responsibility for the employee relationship, and when an employee changes jobs, he can move

his PRPP to the new employer—assuming, of course, that the employer is a member of a pooled pension. But the withdrawals, then, are restricted until retirement.

A portable pension plan is a convenient pension plan. I think this is particularly important for the generations coming behind us. I remember when people looked at someone who was in the same business for his working life—and I say “his” because it likely was a him—as a feature of the dedication and the commitment and the loyalty that that person had to an employer. Today, people change jobs in two to five years; they move, on average, every five years. So we’re looking at an entirely different dynamic in terms of the users, the potential beneficiaries, of a pooled pension plan. It’s driven by the economics, by the technology, all the things that make people look for new opportunities and new challenges in their working life.

So the notion, then, that people are only going to stay in their job for a short time is the reality. It’s important for the younger generations to have access to a portable pension plan that is their own, rather than to be tied to a company pension. If a younger person has five to 10 jobs from the ages of 25 to 50, it doesn’t make sense to have a patchwork of pensions. Rather, it makes much more sense for that person to have a consistent PRPP that they can take with them to a new job. So I think it’s important to see the PRPP system as one that is easy for employers to offer and easy for employees who want to contribute.

People might ask, “Why not just encourage more savings in RRSPs or group RRSPs?” Pooled pensions offer a strong alternative to RRSPs. Economies of scale would make PRPPs considerably less to administer than is possible through the RRSP process, so there is going to be a fee advantage to offer in the PRPP. Large-scale investment is also possible with the pooled plans because of, as I mentioned a moment ago, the large pool of contributors.

I’ve personally spoken with representatives of Ontario’s financial industries and banks. They see PRPPs as an attractive product they want to offer. They know how difficult it is for people to be able to feel comfortable about saving, to understand what the choices are and to look at some of the obstacles that they may have.

I think one of the most difficult things for people is seeking advice. Where should they go? I can imagine that the viewers who provide advice say, “It’s me. I’m here.” Thankfully, many of them are there, and many people take advantage of their expertise. But I think that there’s still an apprehension on the part of many people that, “I don’t have a lot of money. I think only rich people go there. I wouldn’t know what questions to ask.” And those are the kinds of obstacles that are practical and real, and something like a PRPP would help to allay that concern. It comes back to the point I made at the very beginning: It’s voluntary and easily understood. Then they may embrace that and move on to a tax-free savings account or something else that they’ll find useful to them as well. PRPPs are designed to make saving easier and will certainly encourage people who aren’t doing so.

Business stakeholders have long hailed the PRPP as superior to standard pension plans because it’s voluntary for employers. If an employer should choose to contribute to an employee’s PRPP, their contributions are deducted as an expense. That means that they are not required to pay Canada Pension and other applicable payroll taxes on the contribution. So there’s a huge benefit to encourage people to provide this as a vehicle for their employees.

Unlike with a Registered Retirement Savings Plan, contributions to a PRPP also do not count as taxable income to the employee. In times of economic uncertainty, it is obvious that a PRPP can benefit both employees and business owners. It’s definitely a win-win situation. I know that many employers are looking forward to the opportunity to offer PRPPs to their employees.

Back in 2012, when this was first being generated by the federal government, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business surveyed their members. The survey found that 80% of small business owners do not have a retirement plan in place for themselves or their employees, but 34% would consider participating in a PRPP if it was available, and 30% were open to it as an option.

Clearly, with PRPP legislation actually in place, more people would have the opportunity to save for retirement. I think that my little digression into the nine out of 10 Quebec businesses who now see the benefits is a demonstration of how quickly it can be assumed there would be take-up on this.

As I mentioned at the beginning, Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, is mandatory. This is voluntary, and I think it’s important to understand the difference. Many people, because of the public hearings going on on Bill 56, have introduced some concerns—many concerns, actually—on the Ontario pension. What they point out is that, frankly, Ontario families are struggling; so are Ontario businesses. They look at the kind of deficit that the government is carrying, they look at the cost of servicing the debt, which is almost as great as—I think the cost is the third most expensive item after health and education.

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The businesses and associations that I’ve spoken to have certainly expressed a great deal of concern over the details of the ORPP, and so I think we need to look at what some of those concerns are. It’s certainly not just my opinion, but the sentiments of Ontario’s small businesses and associations, including hundreds of local chambers of commerce across the province that have created a coalition to deal with this new proposed pension plan. Between red tape regulations and payroll taxes, the government seems to be on the lookout for ways to make running a business difficult in this province.

They are looking at energy costs and other initiatives that have deeply affected the way in which businesses are able to operate, if at all. The manufacturing sector is a perfect example of this, as many businesses are packing up and finding more affordable places to do business or introducing layoffs, including Caterpillar, Heinz, Stelco,

Kellogg's, Kraft, John Deere, GM, Hershey's, Siemens, Campbell's Soup, Sears, BlackBerry, Ford, General Mills and Unilever, just to name a few. When businesses are struggling, the government should be trying to create incentives for businesses to stay in Ontario and thrive. Instead, the Liberals continue to make it difficult to do business in Ontario.

In a statement from this past summer, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said, "Manufacturers are facing tough economic times and rising energy costs which are hurting their ability to compete globally." Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals wanted to help our economy, they would make Ontario a more friendly place to do business. Instead, years of waste and mismanagement have forced upon both Ontario residents and their businesses increased costs, such as the global adjustment cost on energy bills. This surcharge is a result of over a decade of Liberal failures in our energy sector, including the microFIT program. Such projects have only increased costs for families and businesses and have done nothing to help Ontario's economy.

Charging more for energy when all our neighbours are becoming more competitive is the wrong direction and forces business to move outside Ontario. Soon we will be seeing a carbon tax, putting even more pressure on business. The ORPP will surely be yet another challenge for businesses by increasing costs, and businesses have been vocal about the danger of increasing costs eventually leading to decreasing the number of jobs. This is a danger Ontario can't afford. Our province already has half a million people out of work, and we risk seeing even more people on the sidelines not working and therefore not paying into a pension plan. The ORPP will be doing more harm than good. I want to emphasize this because of the fact that this is in contrast to the voluntary nature of Bill 57, the registered pooled pension.

The response to the ORPP from the CFIB includes the following:

The ORPP unfairly targets small business owners and their employees.

The 1.9% contribution rate for the employer and employee is far from modest and is actually a massive 40% increase to the current pension CPP payroll premiums that businesses pay.

As the ORPP premiums will be charged on income up to \$90,000, those earning between the current CPP limit of \$52,000 and \$90,000 will have a brand new tax that did not exist on that income before.

The ORPP will be administered by a new arm's-length agency. We've seen other agencies of this government, and they have severely eroded the trust of the general public and small business due to their lack of transparency and accountability.

The ORPP is expected to collect \$3.5 billion annually in contributions. The fact that many public sector pensions currently have billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities does not instill confidence in those who would be paying into the fund.

Employers will have to remit to the ORPP separately from CPP, and obviously this will create an enormous

increase in red tape. It severely undermines the government's ongoing efforts to be a leader in cutting red tape.

As the ORPP is a provincial plan, it will significantly undermine the competitiveness of Ontario's businesses.

In a 2014 policy submission, the CFIB explicitly supported PRPPs over the proposed Ontario pension: "CFIB is pleased that the province of Ontario is holding consultations on implementing a pooled registered pension plan since, from a small business perspective, a PRPP is a much more favourable option than mandatory increases in CPP premiums or mandatory contributions to a new Ontario pension plan. CFIB has publicly supported the ... PRPP as a voluntary, low-cost and administratively simple retirement mechanism. If properly designed, the PRPP has the potential of expanding pension coverage by attracting employers, employees and the self-employed, who currently do not offer or contribute to a pension plan."

Because the ORPP is being introduced at this time and employees will be forced to pay into this new mandatory pension plan, those who would like to contribute to PRPPs might not have the ability to do so. There's a certain amount of questions about the way in which one appears to be in competition with, as opposed to complementary to, the other. This creates a certain problem in terms of, as others have mentioned, the logic of offering two at the same time—one that is built on a voluntary principle and the other one built on a mandatory principle.

The question remains in terms of how one will impact on the other, but certainly the question of providing people with a voluntary system, an opportunity to make choices, is something that people value. Even when we look at the issues around what constitutes a complementary or a comparable plan to the Ontario registered plan, it demonstrates again that people want choice.

I think that the PRPP speaks to that motive of choice, of making responsible decisions and having the government provide the opportunity for people to extend their retirement savings in this regard.

According to my understanding, Bill 57 would be under the regulatory authority of FSCO. This is the provincial body that regulates the insurance sector, pension plans, loans and trust companies, credit unions, the mortgage brokering sector, co-operative corporations in Ontario, and service providers. That is the regulation or the government role with regard to PRPPs.

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With regard to the Ontario registered plan, they are talking about an arm's-length organization with no political interference, but I think that people have some skepticism about arm's-length experiences with this government. Certainly, when you think about eHealth and Ornge and the various other scandals and police investigations that are taking place, it's questionable in many minds about the value of these arm's-length organizations, particularly when they look back at the Ontario budget: "By ... encouraging more Ontarians to save through a proposed new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan,

new pools of capital would be available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges and new transit." I think that is a clue as to what the government plans to do with your money.

I think it might be appropriate, then, at this point, to have a look at what happened in Quebec when it set about to do the same thing. It has shown that the result for the Quebec Pension Plan has been lower returns on investment, which, again, presents a potential problem here in Ontario. The result of lower returns on investment is an inevitable contribution rate hike. Currently, the Quebec Pension Plan requires a contribution rate higher than that of the CPP. More hikes will likely be coming as well due to funding shortfalls because of low returns on investment, again, because investments are benefiting the province rather than the retirees. If you look at the quote I gave from the budget, the Ontario pension plan is unabashedly being organized to provide new pools of capital, and this is what happened in Quebec. The *raison d'être* for Quebec's pension is to make investments that satisfy the government's priorities rather than maximize the rate of return for retirees.

If you look at the Canada pension, which the government is fond of comparing itself to, it exists for no other reason than the pensioners, and that is what pensions are for—they're not for a tax-free opportunity to collect money from the pockets of the people of this province.

The *raison d'être* for Quebec's pension is to make investments that satisfy the government's priorities. The Caisse, Quebec's pension fund manager, routinely partners with Quebec companies to take over foreign companies. In 2012, the Caisse invested \$1 billion in CGI, the world's fifth-largest independent provider of computer, communications and information technology services to facilitate its purchase of UK-based tech provider Logica for \$2.8 billion. The Caisse also increased its stake in the Quebec engineering firm Genivar to help the company buy British-based WSP. Back in 2000, the QPP partnered with Quebecor and contributed over \$1 billion to take over Vidéotron.

It's no coincidence that the Caisse invests heavily in Quebec companies yet has had to increase contribution rates to make up for low returns on investment. In 2008, it faced a shortfall of \$40 billion. In the 2011 Quebec budget, increased contribution rates were promised as a way to make up for this shortfall. According to the budget, the steady-state contribution rate—i.e., the rate needed to secure long-term financial stability—is currently at 11%. With the current contribution rate of 9.9%, the benefits paid by the plan will exceed contributions as of 2013.

In the short term, the plan will then have to draw on investment income and, as of 2023, tap its reserve to fund benefits for retirees. If there is no adjustment to the plan, the reserve will be depleted by 2039. It gives you a sense of the fact that when they go from their real job, a pension plan is for pensioners; it is not for make-work projects, infrastructure projects.

I would hope that this government would learn from that political experience in Quebec and recognize the

dangers of making it for political means rather than positive returns for retirees. However, it's kind of questionable when you look at that quote I gave you from last year's budget. So how can anyone say there is no link with an Ontario pension and transit infrastructure? The budget makes it quite clear that there is, in fact, a connection—a close one. Clearly, no lessons are being learned from Quebec's past mistakes, and I think it's really important to look at that instead of encouraging investment through vehicles such as the PRPP.

In the few minutes that I have left at this time, I want to draw your attention to the comparable, in a different jurisdiction, and this would be in the United Kingdom's NEST. UK pension reforms were introduced in 2008 by the former Labour government which made it mandatory for employers to offer a workplace pension that both employers and employees contribute to. The National Employment Savings Trust, NEST, was established in 2010 as a national pension scheme open to any employer who wanted to use it to satisfy his workplace pension duty. Employers already using a qualifying pension scheme are not obligated to use NEST, but they are able to offer it to their employees alongside the existing scheme.

Since its inception in 2012, NEST has been growing. From 2013 to 2014, the number of employers offering NEST increased from 347 to 4,692. Membership increased from 80,000 individuals to over a million members, and assets under management increased from £3.8 million to £104 million. The opt-out rate stands at 9%. Those are the figures that this program offers in the UK.

NEST offers their members a variety of funds to suit investment and retirement needs. These funds include standard retirement date funds—which means if you look at where you are, your age, your decade, you have common goals with other people, generally, at that age, and that would be the kind of retirement option, then, that you would seek in looking at the range of investment needs—and other funds for people with personal beliefs or preferences about how their money should be managed. It once again goes back to the theme of "voluntary." What would suit your particular pension needs?

The NEST pension scheme is run by NEST Corp. NEST Corp. decides how the scheme is run and how they invest contributions. NEST Corp. is accountable to Parliament through the Department for Work and Pensions, but it is not part of the government; they are run independently and work for pensioners. As they say, "We're here to make money for you, not us." What a great idea.

NEST invests in a variety of companies to get the best returns, many of which are located outside the United Kingdom. Some of the top 10 companies include Apple, ExxonMobil, Google, Microsoft, Royal Dutch Shell and Nestlé. Some 8.5% of the shares in NEST are UK companies, 17% are European, and nearly 55% are North American. NEST invests in the best interests of its pensioners. Sometimes, the best investments for a particular fund are found outside the province or country.

1010

Similarly, our own Canada Pension Plan invests heavily in foreign assets. According to a 2013 CBC report, “The fund behind Canada’s largest single-purpose pension was worth just over \$170 billion by the end of September 2012, up from some \$152 billion in 2011, partly on the strength of investments that include overseas real estate and infrastructure, according to the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board.”

NEST is not a perfect comparison to our made-in-Canada PRPP scheme, but there are many elements of NEST that I think we can look at and see that it provides a pretty solid comparison.

I think it’s important that NEST is portable. Employees can bring it from one workplace to another, and move within the UK, and still have access to their pension plan. Much in the way that this one is modelled, it would allow for people right across the country—so they can move and still have access to their pension plan.

Furthermore, NEST offers a diverse array of funds to suit the investor—again, I think this is contemplated with the PRPP model as well—so that investors have a choice in the type of funds they wish to invest in, which would make NEST an attractive savings tool for some people who might not already be saving.

Lastly, NEST invests in funds that best serve its pensioners, unlike the ORPP, which will be investing solely in our province and not diversifying investments. The first rule of thumb on saving is not to put all your eggs in one basket.

Portability and choice of investment would create an ideal scenario for Ontarians who wish to invest, who might not already be doing so. I believe that by making investing easy and portable, and by offering choice, NEST provides a good example of what Ontario’s PRPPs can do to encourage people to save for retirement.

Mr. Speaker, are we close?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You’re getting close.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Are we there?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, you’ve got three minutes.

Mrs. Julia Munro: As I mentioned earlier, businesses are very keen on offering PRPPs. I hope the government has noted, from the stakeholder consultations, the need for the reservations and concerns that have been raised by business about the Ontario plan.

Going back to the original conversations with regard to the need for a pooled registered plan: In 2012, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce submitted a letter to then-Finance Minister Dwight Duncan, calling on the government to introduce legislation to implement PRPPs: “We hope you believe, as we do, that PRPPs will help strengthen the retirement income system in Ontario.”

Again in 2012, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business submitted a letter to Finance Minister Dwight Duncan, urging him “to move quickly to implement pooled registered pension plans in your province. We further ask you to avoid increasing Canada Pension Plan premiums at this time....”

PRPPs “address some of the problems with current pension tools by promoting lower fees and by shifting the administrative burden from employers to financial institutions. In addition to lower fees, employee plans will also benefit from the fact that, unlike contributions to employee RRSP plans, employer contributions” to pooled registered plans “will not attract additional payroll taxes like EI, CPP and WSIB premiums.”

A little more recently, this year the Ontario chamber and the Certified General Accountants of Ontario partnered to consult employers on pension reform. They found that employers are firmly in favour of PRPPs and are much less supportive of enhancing government-managed programs.

“I don’t think we need to, or should, mandate additional retirement saving, but I am in favour of the kind of universal coverage with opt-out choice that the Quebec version of PRPP provides.” That is a quote from Dean Connor, president and CEO of Sun Life.

Before I move on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I’d like to thank the member from York–Simcoe. We will continue debate when this issue is brought back to the floor.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It’s now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Reza Moridi: It’s my pleasure, on behalf of Michael Coteau, MPP for Don Valley East, to welcome the family of Danielle Peters. Danielle is a student in Don Valley East and is the page captain today. She’s joined by her mother, Joy; her father, Derek; and her sister, Emily. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a number of guests to introduce this morning. First, on behalf of the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, our page captain today is Kari Peltonen. Accompanying us today is Kari’s mother, Marie. She will be in the members’ gallery this morning.

As well, a guest of my own: I would like the House to join me in welcoming Robert Gutwein, president of Hansa Haus German Canadian cultural club, making his visit in the east members’ gallery. Willkommen.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’d like to welcome Anne Boucher, who is in the west members’ gallery. She’s here shadowing me, believe it or not, from the University of Toronto, but she’s also a resident of the city of Timmins. Welcome to Anne.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Ian MacMillan and Madiha Ahmad from my constituency office. Welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: I’m absolutely delighted to welcome a dear friend today, Mr. Bill McBain, who’s here with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Our page from Thunder Bay—Superior North, Kari Peltonen, is one of the captains here today, so that's great. Joining Kari is her mother, Marie Peltonen. Marie, welcome. It's great to have you here. Let's welcome her.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's not an introduction, but today is Agnes Macphail's 125th birthday—the very first woman MP and one of the first woman MPPs. I just want to say: Happy birthday, Agnes Macphail.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my privilege today to welcome the mother of our page Alycia Berg from Cambridge. Her mother is in the members' gallery: Bonnie Berg. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would like to introduce Mr. Derek Burchell-Burger, who will be expanding his culture here in Ontario. He joins us from South Africa.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce Natasha Pelletier, who is our page captain today—a page from my riding of St. Paul's. Her parents are here today watching question period: her mother, Luba Katic, and her father, Eric Pelletier.

Mr. Tim Hudak: None of us would be here without the hard work and the extraordinary dedication and leadership of our local riding association executives, so I'm proud to introduce six members of my team that are doing a Join Tim Hudak at Work Day today, suffering through that: Justin O'Donnell, Colin DeVries, Geri and Evert Ras, Wilma McNall and Boyd Haan. Folks, welcome to Queen's Park. Thanks for joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome the Heart and Stroke Foundation board members, volunteers and senior leadership who are here with us today at Queen's Park, including Michael Barrack, Ontario board chair; Navdeep Bains; Tom McAllister; and Mark Holland. They're with us today for Heart at the Park. Welcome.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I didn't bring my entire association to work today, but I do have a good friend and supporter, Stefan Wiesen, who has joined me at Queen's Park today. I'd like everyone to welcome him.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would be remiss in not introducing her: She often hides herself in the office downstairs, and she has finally made it up here to the Legislature. I want to introduce my executive assistant, Claire Prashaw.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park today members of the Heart and Stroke Foundation staff: Colleen Hill, who is the manager of Heart Healthy Children and Youth in Ontario, and her colleague from Windsor Denise Smith, the health promotion specialist for southwestern Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the east members' gallery today are members of the Ontario Waterpower Association, which is headquartered in the riding of Peterborough. President Paul Norris and colleagues are there. I would recommend that everybody take the opportunity to visit the reception from 5:30 to 7:30 in the legislative dining room

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear pins in recognition of Heart and Stroke Foundation Day at Queen's Park, known as Heart at the Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is requesting unanimous consent to wear the ribbon for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Do we agree? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, there has been much speculation, but few hard facts, about your selling off of Hydro One. It's very worrisome how secretive you have been throughout this process.

Hydro One is the property of the people of Ontario, and they have every right to know your party's schemes to sell their assets to dig you out of the fiscal mess that you and your Premier have created.

Your leader constantly talks about running an open and transparent government. Now is your chance to live up to her words. Minister, when do you intend to reveal to the people exactly what you plan to do with Hydro One?

I think the question implies something terrible about the timing. The reality is, Mr. Clark has been working on this now for 10 months. He has a team of very experienced, sensitive, responsible people who are looking at all of our assets to see how they can be repurposed so that we can fund the infrastructure and fund the projects that the members on the other side continually ask for.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier and other members of cabinet have made it very, very clear that decisions with respect to our assets and our repurposing of assets will likely be included in the next budget.

They stand up and ask for transit. They are asking for transit in all parts of the province, and now we're going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, Hydro One is paid for by the electricity consumers of this province. They are the ones who have built the asset. They are the ones who own it. The company's operations, employees and pensions have been paid for by the electricity ratepayers.

Minister, you have already socked it to the energy consumers, with them paying among the highest energy prices in North America. You have suggested that you plan to take any proceeds from the potential sale and invest it in infrastructure. How can you justify putting the

cost of infrastructure onto the hydro bills of the people of this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that the directions and instructions that we have provided to those experts who are advising us is that the interests of the ratepayer shall be paramount. We believe there will be opportunities for significant mitigation of rates under a new structure that we would set up.

In addition to that, the members know that this is a regulated industry, that the Ontario Energy Board manages the rates in this province for gas and for electricity and that frequently requests for increased rates are rejected or they're lowered by the Ontario Energy Board. **1040**

We have a strong advocate for the consumer in the Ontario Energy Board. Regardless of what happens, the Ontario Energy Board will continue to strongly represent the interests of the consumer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, in 12 years you have never put the interests of the energy consumer first, not once. They don't trust your government on the energy file. They've seen their hydro bills more than triple since 2003. Disasters, scandals and fiascos are the legacy of your energy policy. The people are worried that because of your desperate need for cash, you will sell off Hydro One at far below market value.

Minister, will you commit to the people of Ontario today that before any deal is signed, you will put it in front of the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General so that they can vet it to ensure that Ontarians are getting fair market value for the asset that they own?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. Order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Wow, this is really rich, coming from that side of the House. I tell you, that's the party that messed up in the first place and left us with a legacy of stranded debt that is costing ratepayers to this day, Mr. Speaker.

What we're going to do, and what we've made very clear in the budget in 2014, is to do a full review of these assets, which are rightly owned by the people of Ontario. That is exactly who we're fighting for. That's why we're going to do everything we can.

I may also say that it's premature to make any responses, because decisions haven't been made specifically on the report that's being done right now, but the principles are guided by the fact that public interest must remain paramount and is protected; that decisions are in line with maximizing value for Ontarians; and that the decision process will remain transparent, professional and independently validated.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister there's a

problem at the Housing Services Corp. that can't wait for your review or the passing of my private member's bill. The Housing Services Corp. is pushing housing providers to make tenant insurance mandatory and tenants are only being told about the HSC's tenant insurance. The insurance company, the broker and the general managing agency who are doing the work are getting paid, but tenants are also paying 5% to go back to HSC's pockets.

Do you approve of HSC getting a 5% kickback on insurance premiums paid by the people who can least afford it?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What I understand is that the Housing Services Corp. is operating under the legislation that was passed by the party opposite when they were in government. The regulatory regime around that was spelled out by them, including the pooling and some of the financial aspects of that.

I've answered this question before. Very simply put, we're doing a review. We're doing a review because we put accountability measures in place that weren't there. We discovered there were some difficulties. I share the concern of the member opposite, and we're responding to fix the problem. It's as simple as that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, this is taking advantage of people who are living in social housing, and it's happening today under your watch.

In Oxford, staff simply called the local insurance broker for a quote and got a lower rate than HSC's tenant insurance, probably because HSC insurance is inflated to pay them a 5% kickback. Under your watch, HSC is taking money from social housing tenants and spending it on trips to Europe, bottles of wine, lobster and questionable investments in Manchester, England.

Minister, will you contact the HSC today, ask them to stop the kickback, lower the prices and refund the money taken from tenants in the social housing units?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Let me just share some of the anecdotal comments that we've received from some of the municipalities that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew. And the member from Oxford: You asked the question; I'm sure you want to hear the answer. Thank you.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

"HSC works for us housing providers by leveraging our combined buying power in the private market, making sure we get the best deals"—Peel Housing Corp.

"Through the gas program, we've seen stable pricing and value-added programs tailored to our local needs. When it comes to insurance, they've helped to guide us through risk management by giving us a better understanding of where we might be vulnerable and how to manage the risk"—Windsor Essex Community Housing.

"I have been very impressed with HSC's work in bringing together"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, your government is famous for trying to dodge responsibility. The Premier has been doing it for weeks on the Sudbury mess, delaying her meeting with the OPP and refusing to hold her staff accountable.

But your efforts to dodge the blame are hurting people in social housing. Minister, most of the problems in Housing Services Corp. started in 2007 and until now—long after your government was elected. Now you know that your review doesn't cover any of these problems. You're only doing a review for the last two years.

Minister, will you call in the auditor? Will you contact HSC today and ask them to stop the kickback, lower insurance and refund the money to tenants in social housing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I heard a heckle that I'm not happy with, but I don't want to assign it to someone.

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I think the party opposite—the member opposite—insists on too strict a paradox: that we do well what they weren't prepared to do at all. The reality is—

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: By the way, Mr. Speaker, it's a challenge that we could easily rise to, to do well what they didn't do at all.

In terms of dodging responsibility—we didn't do that. When I reviewed reports outlining some of the difficulties, I wrote to the board. They're now buying into cabinet and Treasury Board—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: They're going to expense guidelines. There have been some changes at the board, and they have requested us to work with them to bring in a third-party evaluator. We're looking at what's broke and how to fix it.

While I share the concerns of the member opposite, we part on what the solution is.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Is the Deputy Premier under the impression that Ontarians want to actually have the Liberal government privatize Hydro One and their local hydro companies?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that the people of this province, right across this province, are very, very interested in seeing enhanced investments in transportation, in transit, in that much-needed infrastructure.

The notion that we have assets that we own, where we could get more value for those assets—to convert exist-

ing assets into new assets is something that I think has tremendous appeal for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals seem to think that we can't have both public hydro and public transit and transportation infrastructure. We can have both, but it will mean ending Liberal waste, incompetence and corruption.

What we can't do is be short-sighted about assets that put money in the bank and actually help us pay for infrastructure, year over year. Are the Liberals so short-sighted that they think selling off assets like Hydro One—that makes a profit, year in and year out, putting money into schools, into health care and into services—is a way to build for the future?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that we had an interesting opposition day motion debated yesterday in this House. It was a bit surprising that, I think, about half the NDP caucus was here to actually vote on that opposition day motion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I listen carefully—I try. The member knows that we do not make any reference to attendance in this place, and I would want you not to do so.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —because it wasn't in reference to an individual.

However, what that motion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A withdraw is a withdraw and only a withdraw.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw, Speaker.

I did want to point out that there were many, many factual errors in that motion. Let me give you a few examples of facts.

They said that we cut 6% out of nearly every ministry in the last budget. That simply is not true—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, let's cut through all the rhetoric here. Can the Deputy Premier tell Ontarians whether the Liberals are going to privatize Hydro One or the local hydro companies that people rely on to deliver electricity to their homes and businesses? Are they going to privatize them? That's the question.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our budget has laid out our path to balance. We have a very large deficit. We are getting to balance on that deficit. We have a number of strategies. We are looking at every program across government to make sure that we're getting the best value for each of those programs. We're managing compensation costs. We're ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of taxes by looking specifically at the underground economy. And we are determined to unlock the value of our provincial assets. As the finance minister has said, these are assets that are owned by the people of Ontario, and if

we can unlock the value to add more infrastructure, to add more transit, then that's the right thing to do.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Deputy Premier: Perhaps the Deputy Premier and Chair of Treasury Board should look at her own budget. On page 244 of the 2014 budget, the Deputy Premier will find a line that says ministries are going to be cut by 6% in 2014, in 2015, in 2016 and in 2017. That means that people will lose their jobs and services are going to be cut.

Can the Deputy Premier tell Ontarians how many more people are going to be fired as part of the 2015 budget and how many more services are going to be cut by Liberals as a result of the 2015 budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would refer the member opposite to actually look at the page of the budget that she has just referenced. What she will see is that overall spending is actually increasing. So to mislead—I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You have to withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw.

To cherry-pick one line without looking at the big picture does not tell the whole story. But they've been wrong on other things as well.

They said that we're cutting health care. In fact, our budget in home and community care went up \$270 million on top of the \$260 million the year before. Overall, the health care budget is going up.

When it comes to education, they are saying we're cutting spending on education. That is simply not accurate. We're increasing spending on education.

They say we want to fire 100,000 people. They got that mixed up with the PC platform. We are continuing to build the services—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last December, the Auditor General said "the tangible costs" of P3s, "(such as those for construction, financing, legal services, engineering services and project management services) were estimated to be" over "\$8 billion higher" than they were estimated to be if the projects were managed by the public sector.

The Liberals insist that the well has run dry and that the only solution is slashing and privatization. But somehow the Premier can find \$8 billion that is totally wasted on P3s.

Are the Liberals going to keep firing nurses at the same time as they keep feathering the nests of well-connected construction companies?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What anybody watching at home would be interested to know—if they actually looked at the robust nine-page platform of the NDP in the last election, they would see that their financial assumptions were the very same as ours, except, in addition, the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. We've got a two-way conversation going on behind the scenes here and I want it all to stop.

Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's get this straight: They ran on our numbers and then said they could do way better. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo said she could cut \$600 million more than we were planning. So I don't know where they're coming from. It seems to me that they are in a bit of disarray over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, two words: eight billion. Eight billion dollars that they're wasting every single time they put a P3 out there.

Look, nurses are being fired across Ontario, but when it comes to wasting billions on P3s, the chequebook comes out. Schools are being closed across the province, but when it comes to bankrolling billions in new corporate giveaways, the chequebook comes out. Public hydro companies are going on the auction block because the Premier says the cupboard is bare, but when Liberal waste and incompetence become a political headache, or a few Liberals see their jobs threatened, the chequebook comes out.

Will this Liberal government change their priorities, end the cuts, stop blowing billions on scandals and corporate giveaways, and pay attention to the people of this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm encouraged by the question, only because I believe now that the member, the leader of the third party, may actually show up for lock-up at the next budget and actually get into the details that she's making reference to. Show up and we can—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a cheap shot. We've got to do better in this place, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think there are a lot of people who should be doing a lot better.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need that kind of comment, either.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, had she read the budget and recognized that we are looking at a number of initiatives, including the assets, to maximize those returns so that we can reinvest into projects that matter and make us competitive—she should also note that the leader—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'll do it in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you won't. New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess the finance minister lost count.

Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, yesterday I asked you whether you were aware of any slush funds being operated by the WSIB. Apparently neither you nor your Premier seemed to have any understanding of the fund in question.

Minister, an internal briefing note from the WSIB states that there was no oversight, as a direct result of political pressures. It also states that government policy on expenses was directly contravened as a result of those same political pressures.

Minister, given a direct connection between your Premier's chief of staff and the WSIB, can you explain to this House exactly what political pressures were applied to keep this slush fund operating, and by whom?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the House today, because certainly I think we're getting two very different opinions. I'd like to give you what I believe are the facts that the people of Ontario should know. That is, that the WSIB Grants and Research Program is delivered by the WSIB with funds that are collected from its employer premiums. It's a program that was brought into place in 1990. It funds several partner organizations, including the Ontario Federation of Labour. What they do is they provide help and training in claims management, specifically for workers to navigate the claims system to facilitate the return to work.

In 2012, shortly after some new leadership took over at the WSIB, an audit was conducted—a perfectly good business practice—to learn what changes could be made to enhance the system. Those changes have been put in place. As of 2016, everybody will be operating in a new manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, Speaker, let's go back to the facts. Here's the briefing note that we got from freedom of information, Minister; if you like, we'll send you a copy of it after.

My question is straightforward. The KPMG audit was in 2014. The briefing note says there was political pressure applied in multiple situations related to the operations of this slush fund. The KPMG audit found that this program is worthless and does nothing to prevent workplace accidents, and yet the best we can tell is that the Premier and Sid Ryan continue to scratch each other's backs with this taxpayer money.

Minister, exactly what political pressures are being applied to keep this million-dollar slush fund operating?

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Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As I mentioned in my previous answer, this is a grant program that's managed by the WSIB. What it does is, it funds partner organizations to help injured workers return to work or train for new employment—perfectly good business practice.

An audit was conducted that covered the period from 2009 to 2012. They found there was a lot of good in the program. They found there were some areas where some improvements could be made. As a result of the work that was done by KPMG, that information was brought forward to the WSIB. It has made those changes and

informed its partners. We're in a transition year; those changes come into effect in 2016.

This is about making sure that injured workers in this province receive the help they need, return to work quickly and are treated in the manner they should be.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can you tell me why you as the Deputy Premier, the Premier and other ministers of the crown won't answer any of the questions as to the Premier's role in the bribery of Andrew Olivier in the Sudbury by-election?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Before I call on the Deputy Premier, I'm going to just offer a caution. The language is starting to get really close to what I know you would realize is not parliamentary, so I ask you to be cautious, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier and others have spoken dozens of times on this very issue, Speaker. You know that we take this very, very seriously. You know that there is an investigation under way. You know that that investigation is being performed by people who actually have the skills and have the knowledge to conduct a fair and complete investigation. You know that the Premier is co-operating perfectly.

I do think it's important to read once again into the record what the Chief Electoral Officer said: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, the public has the right to know what it is the Premier did or did not do. In this House, members of the opposition have stood numerous times in order to ask very direct questions in regard to what happened within that whole fiasco in the Sudbury bribery scandal.

So I ask you again: Is the reason why the Premier is not answering any of these questions that she's afraid to answer those questions without having her lawyers beside her because she was the one giving the orders in order to do this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we've used many examples of when others in the House are involved in an investigation and they say they cannot comment because there's an investigation going on. The NDP has done exactly that. In fact, our very own member from Timmins-James Bay has said, "You do have a larger responsibility to make sure you're careful in the use of your words so you don't interfere in any ... way."

The member opposite is right. Why he can say that and expect the Premier to do something different is beyond me.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, I understand that on Monday evening,

you took part in the launch of Canada's first Chinese-currency—renminbi—trading hub. I heard a lot of good things about Shu Shan Min's remarks.

I also understand that this means that Toronto is the only jurisdiction in all of the Americas that will be able to clear Chinese currency. That's a big deal for importers, exporters and investors.

I know that the constituents in my riding of Trinity-Spadina are excited about our government's lead in making Ontario a global leader in investment and trade.

Minister, could you please tell us more about this fantastic opportunity for Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It was a great pleasure to be at the RMB hub launch with the member for Trinity-Spadina as well as the Minister of International Trade, recognizing the union between Canada and the Chinese authorities.

Toronto, Ontario, now becomes the only financial centre in all of the Americas—North America and South America—to be able to do this currency trade, which will provide tremendous savings to businesses, make us competitive and enable Ontario and Canada to be more prominent in these activities. It's very good for Toronto, very good for Ontario and very good for British Columbia, whom we worked with closely over the last 18 months to make this happen.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of what happened a couple of days ago. It's going to improve relations with China.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for that answer. It sounds like the launch of the RMB hub is a huge economic opportunity not only for the province but also for the entire nation. It's clear that our government is committed to building Ontario up as a global leader and economic partner.

The Premier's recent trade mission to China underlines the importance of this economic relationship. To date, the mission has attracted nearly \$1.1 billion to Ontario in new deals and is creating nearly 1,900 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Finance please inform this House as to what future economic opportunities this RMB hub will facilitate?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member is absolutely correct: The work that he as well as the Minister of International Trade have done and the work that the Premier has done in her trade mission to China has enabled some of this to come to fruition. But I also give tremendous credit to the federal government and Minister of Finance federally, who took a lead on this, as well as Mike de Jong, the Minister of Finance for British Columbia.

In the end, the Canadian RMB trading hub will facilitate increased investment in trade, strengthen Canada's competitive position in global financial markets, build on our financial services and foreign exchange market expertise and infrastructure right here in Toronto, and strengthen Canada's broader economic relationship with China.

Congratulations to all who made this happen.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Earlier today, it was revealed that the Ottawa Hospital had to eliminate another 35 full-time equivalents in health care. This is on top of cuts at the CHEO hospital in my city. We know that North Bay, for example, has lost close to 100 full-time equivalents in their health care.

These are the direct consequences of ignoring deficit reduction targets: cuts to health care and to education.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister can laugh all she wants, but the Fraser Institute reported this morning that ballooning public sector salaries have increased by a rate of 47% while inflation has only increased by 15%. Today, Ontario public servants are being paid 11% higher than those in the private sector.

My question is very simple: Can the Treasury Board president tell me how many additional job cuts we can expect in health care and education over the next few months as a result of ballooning salaries in the public sector?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is an important question. We should all favourite this question because it is both a spending and a cutting question all in one.

You heard the member opposite say that she's concerned about cuts in health care. In fact, the Ottawa Hospital has had an increase in funding of 49% since 2003. That's over \$200 million more. Yes, it's true that the health care system is changing, and that does mean changing where people are working and the kind of care that is provided in hospital and out of hospital.

But we have a very clear path to balance, and we are on that path. It does involve restraining compensation. If the member opposite would actually look at that Fraser Institute report, she would see that, in fact, compensation has been flatlined for the past five years on an individual basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll bring Pollyanna back to reality here: The Fraser Institute was pretty clear that public sector wages in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will not accept that. Either mention the person's title or their riding, please, and nothing else.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Treasury Board president isn't being clear with the assembly or the people of Ontario. We know that public sector wages are 11% higher than they are in the private sector. We know, for example, that those wages have increased 47% when inflation only rose by 15%. These are direct consequences when we see health care cuts and when we see education cuts. Each time a salary raises beyond the level of inflation, there will be compromises to public services that we value.

Will the Deputy Premier talk about the deficit that she has rung up with her colleagues, as she did earlier in question period, and about the fact that the increases to

public sector salaries are compromising health care services in the city of Ottawa and elsewhere in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I don't often quote the Fraser Institute, but if you would turn to page 9 of the report that was released today, you will see that compensation per provincial government job in 2009 was \$76,337. It is now down to \$75,960.

This is a chart that says that our plan is working, that compensation restraint is under way in the public sector in Ontario, and that's an important piece ongoing, as we get to balance.

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We are determined to get to balance by 2017-18. We're on the path to get there. It's not easy work, let me tell you, but it's important we do it at the same time as we protect the services that matter to the people of this province.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The Liberals have talked about selling off Hydro One. We've heard about breaking up Hydro One and selling it for parts. We've heard about plans for an IPO for Hydro One so that Bay Street can Hoover up the profits that we need for our hospitals and for our schools. We've heard about forced consolidation of local utilities. Of course, none of this came up during the election.

Can the minister please tell Ontarians what Liberals are planning for Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I can tell the member that no final decisions have been made with respect to the asset council. They have neither been approved by Treasury Board or cabinet.

We have very, very competent people advising us on options that we can bring forward. We will bring forward options that will be in the best interests of the people of this province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That would be new. That would be a change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have directed our experts to place the highest priority on protecting the interests of the ratepayer.

Most of all, since this Premier was elected Premier in February 2013, she's investing in people, she's investing in infrastructure and she's creating a dynamic business community.

I will speak to the issue more completely in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I think the minister is being overly modest. I think the Liberals clearly do have a plan for Hydro One, but apparently it's a secret. They didn't tell anyone during the last election, and they won't tell anyone now.

Can the minister end the suspense and tell Ontarians just what the plan is for Hydro One and local utilities across Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I infer from the question that he does not support power in private hands. He has a member who is advocating that we continue to invest in private power; we've indicated that before.

But most importantly, the NDP claims to oppose the privatization of crown corporations, but Manitoba's NDP—their Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act specifically contemplates the privatization of Manitoba Hydro, the Manitoba Public Insurance Corp., the liquor control commission and the Manitoba lotteries corporation.

Mr. Speaker, they have no plan. They haven't had any plan on a whole range of significant strategic issues. They should get to work and put forward something that they think might work, instead of simply criticizing.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, a recent national survey found that over four million Canadians still smoke tobacco. It was the lowest national smoking rate ever recorded, but statistically unchanged from the same survey two years ago.

Just this past Monday, we saw in the news that Montreal city councillors are putting great pressure on Quebec's government to tackle the prevalence of tobacco use in that province. Our government is working hard to toughen tobacco laws, ban smoking in public places, encourage more Ontarians to quit altogether and to protect our kids from ever taking up smoking.

Can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to help bring down smoking rates in our province, and how we are protecting our youth from the dangers of tobacco?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking the member for that very important question. She's very right, Speaker: We are working very hard to reduce smoking in Ontario. I know we are working hard, and we have partners here, like the Heart and Stroke Foundation, who are very valued and who have been with us every step of the way.

I'm pleased to say that, partly as a result of our joint efforts, smoking rates have decreased in Ontario from 24.5% in 2000 to 18.1% in 2013. That's 332,000 fewer smokers.

But I know we also have to do more, and if we are going to reduce smoking rates in Ontario, we have to do two things: First, we have to ensure that that next generation of smokers never begins, and second, we have to help those who smoke now but want to quit. We need to help them. That is why we have invested over \$350 million for tobacco prevention, cessation and protection.

In my supplementary, I will speak more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Again, my question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, in that same Statistics Canada survey, close to 700,000 current or former smokers who had tried e-cigarettes said they had used them to help quit smoking. At this time, I understand that the jury is still out in terms of the effectiveness of e-cigarettes to help people quit smoking, and there is also uncertainty as to their health impacts. As a consequence, Ontarians are concerned about the limited research to properly address these issues. Earlier this month, in fact, the federal Standing Committee on Health called upon the federal government to fund research into these very same questions.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to learn more about e-cigarettes?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member for that supplementary question.

I believe that there is a role for government to protect people from what may be emerging harms. That is what electronic cigarettes are; it's an emerging technology.

There is currently no regulation at all in Ontario around electronic cigarettes. What this means is that a 16-year-old could walk into a store and buy an electronic cigarette. That is why Ontario is being the leader. What we have proposed is legislation that, if passed, would, among other things, ban the sale and supply of electronic cigarettes to youth under the age of 19 and restrict vaping in designated public areas. With this legislation, Speaker, we are trying to balance the potential benefits that might be there of electronic cigarettes in helping adults quit cigarettes, but on the other hand also making sure that that next generation never begins to take up electronic cigarettes.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, Kawartha Downs is a vital asset to the horse racing communities in both of our ridings. Last year, after only being approved for 18 racing dates in a last-minute deal, as opposed to the traditional 90 to 100, Kawartha Downs went on to host a very successful season, with attendance and wagering second only to Woodbine Racetrack across the province.

Sadly, despite all this success, Kawartha Downs saw no reward and were denied their request for additional race dates this season. They also still have no commitment from this government on a long-term deal.

Minister, will you make a commitment today to Kawartha Downs and finalize a long-term transfer payment agreement for this track?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question from the member from Kawartha Lakes—Haliburton—Brook.

A number of years ago we appointed three very competent individuals, the honourable Elmer Buchanan; the honourable John Snobelen, who had a very distinguished career on those benches; and the honourable John Wilkinson, who put together a framework, a plan, that was indeed put in place.

In fact, I go to Kawartha Downs. I was there on four or five occasions to see the excellent work that was being done by Skip Ambrose at Kawartha Downs and the horse racing industry right across the province of Ontario.

In fact, just recently, Sue Leslie extended compliments on what we're doing for the horse racing industry. We know it's important to rural Ontario, and we're going to move the horse racing industry forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, I do hope you move the horse racing industry forward, because you put it back a hundred steps.

That doesn't explain why Kawartha Downs is the only track in the province without a five-year deal. You know that these long-term deals are vital to the horse racing community so stock can be purchased and maintained.

Kawartha Downs has one of the smallest purse pools across the province, and no announcement has been made by your ministry if they will receive their requested increase. If they remain at 18 race dates and a \$35,000 purse per night, it will slowly lead to the death of horse racing in our area and across eastern Ontario.

Minister, you're the one responsible. Will you commit to horse racing in our area and help assist Kawartha Downs by increasing their purse pools and committing to a long-term transfer agreement?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, we see the horse racing industry is very important to rural Ontario. We had three very distinguished individuals—Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Snobelen and Mr. Wilkinson—put together the five-year plan for horse racing in the province of Ontario. We're hearing very positive comments coming back.

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My colleague the finance minister has been working with us. Previous Minister of Agriculture the Honourable Ted McMeekin and the Premier herself have made a commitment to horse racing in the province of Ontario, to make sure it drives our rural economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you a story. Two years ago, when they thought Kawartha Downs was going to close, that member was there, and the former member from Northumberland—Quinte West was there. They were there because they wanted to put the curtains over Kawartha Downs. I was there to make sure Kawartha Downs was going to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. We learned yesterday that instead of doing proper planning for the Pan Am Games, the government is asking Ontarians, in what could be called a faith-based transportation plan, to stay off the roads, miraculously reducing congestion by 20%.

Instead, we learned that they've done absolutely no modelling for how the Pan Am and Parapan Games will

impact city streets. Even if we trust the projections for the highways, every journey starts and ends on municipal streets.

Did they simply forget to do the breakdown and research on this, or did they not do it because they didn't want to hear complaints from the public?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member for that question. Yesterday, I did have the opportunity to update the public with respect to our transportation strategy for the upcoming Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. We have a very strong plan that draws on the expertise brought to us by individuals responsible for the successful transportation plans that were used, for example, at the Vancouver Olympics and the London Olympics. Both communities were able to meet or exceed their reduction targets, the targets of 20% that we've also identified in our plan.

In addition to that, we've created a games route network that calls for HOV lanes that will be operating throughout that network. We did announce some of the details relating to the modelling itself, Speaker.

But on the question about municipal streets in particular, it's important to recognize that our team at MTO and the rest of the TO2015 team have worked really closely with all 30 partners we have across the entire affected region, which would include the municipalities that will be participating. Those municipalities are well aware of the impacts that will occur on their streets, and they're planning for that impact.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The transit systems in Toronto and the GTHA are bursting at capacity now, and the government's plan is to shift tens of thousands of commuters and a quarter of a million visitors on to that system. Minister, where are they all going to fit?

They are spending \$7 million on enhanced transit service for the biggest sporting event that Canada has ever seen. Unfortunately London, England, invested £7 billion in transport systems for the Olympics—quite a contrast. We don't have backups in our network, and we don't have a plan B. What will happen if we have another subway breakdown like we had yesterday? How many hours will be added to people's commute?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I said in my opening response, we are working closely with all 30 of our partners across the affected region. We have a strong strategy in place, and we will achieve our targets.

I think what's most important, which the member opposite didn't recognize, is that currently in the GTHA, we have over \$16 billion worth of transit that's under construction. We'll be delivering the Union Pearson Express in advance of the games themselves.

Speaker, I would also note that it's interesting that this question is coming from a member representing Hamilton because if that member had showed up to yesterday's technical briefing, he would have known that the James Street North GO station that we are currently building will be in service in Hamilton for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

FARM SAFETY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. My riding of Halton is home to a diverse and active farming industry. Take a drive along any side road in Halton, and you will see farms, orchards and livestock operations in the region—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I asked the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek to come to order.

Mr. Paul Miller: Unbelievable. No class.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is warned.

Carry on. Finish your question, please.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: This includes a large variety of farming types.

We all know that workplace safety is vital. No one wants to have a loved one head off to work and come back home injured or not at all. However, most of us don't usually think about farms and farming practices when it comes to workplace safety.

In Ontario, we have close to 50,000 farms and 75,000 farm operators working daily. It's important to ensure their safety. That's why the Canadian Federation of Agriculture established this week as Canadian Agricultural Safety Week.

I know this government is committed to ensuring that farmers, like the ones in Halton, are safe—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my colleague from Halton for the question. I know how she works tirelessly on behalf of the agriculture sector in that great area of Halton.

We do know our government is committed to providing safe working environments for farms right across the province of Ontario. If members had been in the House yesterday, the member from Haldimand—Norfolk shared an example of a personal friend of his who experienced a very devastating farm accident that had long-term implications for that particular family.

Our ministry has been working hard with Workplace Safety and Prevention Services for over 15 years to improve farm safety. Canadian Agricultural Safety Week gives us the opportunity to emphasize that working on safety programs on farms is a top priority for all of us.

We can accomplish this through three ways: through the Ontario FarmSafe network; the agricultural safety days, which focus on safety education and training for children and families, with a goal of reducing child injuries, which have occurred in our agriculture sector; and

through Growing Forward 2, we also fund a number of initiatives, for farmers right across Ontario, that promote farm safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Speaker, farmers are an important part of our economy, but the work they do is often hazardous. Just recently, the Guelph Mercury said, "Farmers are five times more likely to be killed or suffer work-related disability than those in any other occupation."

Many of the people in my riding work in the agricultural sector and face these inherent risks each day. Sargent Farms, for example, is a family-owned and -operated poultry processing business that has operated in Ontario for more than 65 years. This business and hundreds of other high-quality farms are pillars of our local economy.

I understand that in 2006, our government extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include farming operations for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell my constituents what else our government is doing to protect the health and safety of Ontarians who work in our agricultural sector?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm really pleased to be able to take such a timely question from the member from Halton, who is my neighbour in Oakville.

The Ministry of Labour has over 200 trained inspectors. They have got expertise on issues that are very inherent to the health and safety of Ontario's workers, including those who work in the agricultural sector.

What we do at the ministry is we conduct both proactive and reactive visits to farms right across this province, to ensure that the best practices are met and to actually charge those who are not performing safe work. To address and continuously improve farm safety in Ontario, we work with the farming Technical Advisory Committee.

Speaker, the Ministry of Labour continues to make great progress. We've still got more to do, but we want to ensure that Ontario farms are safe places to work.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, in her most recent report, the Auditor General pointed out that the hospice sector in Ontario is providing high-quality care, but then she went on to describe a patchwork approach across the province.

During the election campaign, your government committed to fund 20 new hospices. You reaffirmed that commitment in last year's budget. Matthews House Hospice, in my riding, is one example that does not receive operational funding.

Minister, you're about to release a new budget while you have yet to fulfil your commitments in the last budget. People cannot put off dying to wait for your govern-

ment to do the right thing and provide compassionate, cost-effective care. When are you going to take some pressure off our local hospitals and properly support hospice care?

1130

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I commend the acting leader of the official opposition. I know he is a very strong supporter of palliative care and the valuable work that our hospices do. I know he's going to want to join me, because we so infrequently do this: to celebrate and acknowledge and thank the many, many health care professionals and other professionals, as well as the communities and individuals, that support our hospices and work in palliative care. They do important work across this province every single day.

We have made a commitment to fund the operating costs of 20 new hospices. We're already providing that support to over 30 hospices in the province, and I'm happy to say as well that my parliamentary assistant, John Fraser, has taken upon himself the extraordinarily challenging exercise to develop a palliative care strategy for the entire province and to take upon himself as well the responsibility of focusing on the hospices in those additional 20.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: There are 12,000 people in this province dying in hospital each year because there aren't enough hospice beds. The Auditor General points out that hospice care is much cheaper than hospital care. As an example, in the first six months of last year, Matthews House in my riding cared for 64 people at a cost of \$254,000, all of that money raised by the community. Comparable care in hospital would have cost \$608,000. In other words, Minister, as you know, care in a residential hospice is less than half the cost of hospital care.

Your party platform promised more end-of-life care and, specifically, as you mentioned, the funding of 20 more hospices. It has been 10 months, Minister. I know your heart is in the right place, but there are people dying unnecessarily where they don't want to die, and that's in hospital. They'd rather be in a hospice or at home. Would you do the right thing and live up to your commitments?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, that's why we've made this commitment: because we do value the work that hospices are doing. I don't think the Speaker will mind me referencing a hospice in his riding, actually, Stedman Community Hospice, that I visited before the New Year, which is providing extraordinary service not only within the hospice itself but within the community through its outreach programs. We have made this commitment. The member opposite, as a former Minister of Health, will also know that we were the first government—this government, the Liberal government—to actually provide funding to hospices in Ontario. The former Minister of Health will also note that we were the first government in Ontario to provide an end-of-life strategy in this province.

We're going a step further. We're developing a palliative care strategy so that the care provided is uniform

across the province. Part of that strategy is to fund an additional 20 hospices, their operating costs, as we've committed to do.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health. This morning, patients in London were shocked to learn that elective surgeries have been cut by two thirds for two weeks in a row. That means that dozens of surgeries won't be done. Anyone with a loved one waiting for surgery will be outraged by more delays. Everyone in London has one simple question: Will the minister stop these cuts or will he stand by while patients suffer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for the question. I appreciate it.

The member opposite knows that we aren't cutting health care spending. In fact, the percentage of government funding that goes into health care has increased year over year as long as we've been in power, and that will continue going forward.

Hospitals are independent entities. They work closely with the LHINs, the local health integration networks, within their localities. They make decisions based on not only the financial realities, the budgets that they've been provided with by the ministry, but also from time to time there are changes that happen. I don't know the specifics in terms of the current situation in London, but I certainly will be looking into that.

Our funding for hospitals, Mr. Speaker, over the past decade has on average increased by 50%. We are making significant investments in our hospital environments, but the funding has increased by 50% over the past decade.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. Despite what the minister says, this reduction in elective surgeries in London is just the latest in the growing list of Liberal cuts to London's hospitals: 52,000 nursing hours cut, 80,000 cleaning hours cut, \$37 million cut. Front-line nurses say these cuts are having "a horrendous effect" on patients. How can the Minister of Health stand by and allow patient care to deteriorate in this way in London?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I don't allow that, and I have an expectation of all our hospitals that they maintain the highest quality of care and services that they're required to do. I know also that they work closely with their LHINs, with their local health integration networks, to do that. That's an expectation that I have. Certainly, as I mentioned, with the funding increasing year over year—not only the global health care budget, but the funding that we're providing to hospitals has increased by 50% over the past decade—our hospitals are doing incredible work.

We're measuring the outcomes. We're measuring the quality of services that they're providing. They are working to find efficiencies, provide innovations, and develop and change programs so that they're able to provide even better care. I know they work in concert with their local

communities, the patients they serve and the boards that govern them, but certainly with the LHINs, as well, that have the responsibility for patient care and quality of care.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, most of the time when I've risen in the House to ask questions, I've asked questions about issues that are of specific interest to my community in Etobicoke Centre, but today I want to ask about something that's of concern to all our communities. It speaks to what the government is doing to ensure our fiscal sustainability while also providing important services to Ontarians.

My question this morning is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, when our government made the decision last April to keep the motor coach, Polar Bear Express, rail freight and refurbishment business lines of the ONTC in public hands, we committed to transforming the ONTC to ensure that it was financially sustainable and a strong transportation network for the people of northeastern Ontario.

Minister, the ONTC has recently been in the news around this transformation. This transformation is of course critical to these commitments. Could you update us on the status of the transformation?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Etobicoke Centre. It's really a great question. Our government is absolutely committed to transforming the ONTC.

Less than a year ago, Mr. Speaker, I was up in North Bay announcing that, indeed, we will be keeping four of the five important lines of the Ontario Northland in public hands. At that point, we also made announcements related to strategic investments to ensure that the ONTC continues to support economic growth in northeastern Ontario.

And just during this past month, we have appointed a new board, a new commission of members from northeastern Ontario who are bringing experience in financial management, accounting, organizational restructuring and governance. We're very pleased to have them.

I am particularly pleased, may I say—and I think other members of the House are as well—that Tom Laughren, the former mayor of Timmins, has agreed to serve in the role of chair of the commission. His knowledge and passion for northern Ontario are going to make a real difference. We're excited about his involvement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister. I expect that this new board will bring the strong leadership and skills required to make sure that the transformation is successful.

Minister, given the nature of the ONTC's business, I imagine that labour is an important part of this transformation. I know that there is ongoing collective bargaining between the ONTC and its unions. There has recently been news regarding these negotiations, and I'm wondering if you could update the House on the status of the ONTC's labour negotiations.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you again to the member from Etobicoke Centre for that question. Certainly it's an important one, because there's no question that from the very beginning of our discussions related to how we were going to transform the ONTC, it's been understood by all parties that labour is certainly a critical component of transforming the ONTC to a truly long-term, sustainable organization and continuing to support our very strong commitment to public ownership.

What we're very happy about is that the ONTC and the United Steelworkers have recently reached an agreement. The ratification of a new five-year collective agreement passed this past Friday, with 88% of the USW members voting in favour of the deal. Obviously that's very good news, so I am very much commending the efforts of ONTC management and the USW in working together to negotiate an agreement that balances the business needs of the ONTC, the interests of employees, and the need to provide sustainable and affordable public services.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Oxford has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning the HSC's tenant insurance program. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to recognize, in the members' gallery today, a great friend of the people of Nepean-Carleton and Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the wonderful assistant to MPP Jack MacLaren of Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Brad McNulty. He's an expert at multimedia, an all-around great guy. He's here joining us today from the great city of Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Next member's statement? Introduction of guests.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I want to introduce Chris Yaccato in the members' gallery today—probably well-known to yourself—here on behalf of the Ontario Lung Association. Welcome, Chris.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who is he? Introduction of guests. Introduction of guests? Last call for introduction of guests. It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KEN ROSS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Ken mail: That was referring, this past Friday in a eulogy for my friend Ken Ross, to

little emails he would send to his friends and other community leaders sometimes to give them a boost, make them laugh or give them some support.

Each time we would deal with a provincial budget, I would receive Ken mail with advice for the provincial government on how to pursue its budget and also just a little nugget of inspiration for me to keep going, and I appreciated that. I miss Ken a lot, as I know many other community leaders do. He died at the age of 54 from cancer and complications with respect to pneumonia.

But I want to say this: Not only was he a long-time friend of mine and to so many people in the community, he was a businessman. He owned Ross' Independent. He chaired the BIA. He was a member of the chamber of commerce.

As a grocer, he decided he wanted to give back to all the people in the community and became a wonderful philanthropist. In fact, in the first five years of his business he donated almost \$500,000 back to the community. By this year, it had been up to \$700,000.

He chaired the food bank to make sure that people who were less fortunate would have some food in their tummy, especially for their kids at school.

Ken was a legionnaire. He was with the Order of St. George. He was a Lion. He contributed to Canada Day. He contributed to Oktoberfest. Ken was the type of guy who makes us who we are in this assembly.

When he died last week, it really rocked our community. Young athletes who he had supported, like Kayla Maduk; the autistic community, who he had supported; and those within the Barrhaven Legion were also crushed.

I want to say this before I end: Barrhaven's community lost a great leader, and the Legion, just yesterday, decided to provide \$5,000 to the food bank in Ken's memory. For that, I am grateful.

To Kelly Ross, Ken's wife, and to his four children, my thoughts are with you. Ken's legacy will forever live. Thank you.

YOUTH SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: During the break last week, I took the opportunity to visit some homes operated by the Good Shepherd that serve Hamilton youth.

Angela's Place provides transitional housing apartments to young moms under 21 and babies can stay for up to two years, where they're supported with healthy lifestyle skills, education and child care.

Brennan House is a 15-bed transitional house committed to youths aged 16 to 20, keeping them off the streets. They learn life skills and are provided support and tools to deal with mental health issues, abuse and neglect.

Jeb's Place provides a residential environment for youth with supporting families the tools and supports when dealing with mental health issues, trauma and conflict resolution.

Notre Dame House is Hamilton's only shelter for homeless and street-involved youth. In addition to providing beds for 20 youth, they have on-site access to mental health professionals, a physician and a nurse practitioner. Youth support workers are there to help the youth find their way. Their drop-in meal program provides thousands upon thousands of meals every year.

The staff in these facilities do a fantastic job with budgets that are severely underfunded. Government funding amounts to about \$44 per day per bed, but with ongoing fundraising and their selfless dedication, they make it go so much farther. While this government promises tax cuts to the largest corporations, these dedicated workers give their heart and soul for the children they care deeply about.

AUSTIN RILEY

Mr. Granville Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you and the members of this House about a young man named Austin Riley, from the wonderful city of Uxbridge in my riding. Austin and his family are taking it upon themselves to embark on a tour across North America where Austin will take his go-kart to race against others from Florida to Texas to California, and in BC, Manitoba and Alberta.

Earlier this week, the students of Uxbridge Secondary School gave Austin a resounding round of applause to help launch his tour. They signed banners of support, got to see Austin's go-kart, and even got his autograph.

This is an exciting feat, Mr. Speaker. What makes it even more poignant, though, is that Austin races with autism. He and his family will be spending their tour talking to young people in schools throughout North America about the challenges faced by individuals and families with autism, but also about how hard work and opportunity can go a long way.

I wish Austin and his family a safe and happy trip. I hope you will follow along with Austin's journey on Twitter at @racingautism.

I am proud that people from my riding take it upon themselves to spread compassion and awareness, and I wish them the very best of luck on their way.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, last month I rose in the House to speak about the two wind farm projects being proposed for Merrick and Mattawan townships in my riding of Nipissing. I'm pleased to inform this Legislature that because of the hard work of the local First Nations, Chief Davie Joannis and Chief Clifford Bastien, the five Mattawa-area mayors and many stakeholders, the Mattawan wind farm proposal has been cancelled.

While this is cause for celebration, concerns remain for the wind farm proposed for Merrick township, just north of North Bay. Last night, I held a town hall in my riding on the cost of wind power in Ontario and had over

100 people turn out. They turned out from across the region and spoke about their concerns with industrial wind turbines. Many commented on how wind power has caused their hydro bills to skyrocket, claims that were backed up by the Auditors General in 2011 and 2014 reports. I have resolutions sent to me from the townships of Chisholm, Papineau-Cameron and several others, all voicing their concerns about the proposed wind turbine installation.

This social engineering program has failed, and it's time Ontario changed its course.

GRAIN FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. John Vanthof: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to attend the annual "March classic" meeting held by the Grain Farmers of Ontario in London. It's a combination trade show and business symposium attended by farmers and agribusiness people from across the province and country. It was great to spend some time with my neighbours from back home in District 15, a little place called northern Ontario.

The delegates took the opportunity to thank Henry Van Ankom for his contribution as chair of GFO for the last three years. I would like to echo that sentiment. It's been a privilege to work with Henry and his colleagues on issues impacting the grain industry, and I look forward to continuing to work with the current chair, Mark Brock, as well.

As always, the organizers of the March classic had a very engaging list of speakers, but this year the talk in the halls was not about the speakers or crop prices or even the weather. Producers were talking about the recently posted regulations restricting the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments. Many farmers felt somewhat under fire in the whole neonic debate. They realize the importance of protecting pollinators, and when it was identified as the dust of planting equipment, they acted quickly to control the problem. The Grain Farmers of Ontario continue to work with other stakeholders towards a solution, including proposing increased areas for pollinator-friendly plants.

The government has stated that their goal is to have the strongest regulations in North America. Their goal should be to have the most effective program to protect pollinators and farmers.

1510

FOODSHARE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: On March 12, I had the pleasure to attend the eighth annual Great Big Crunch. This event, hosted by the local Davenport-based organization FoodShare, promotes healthy eating by inviting schools, communities, daycares and workplaces across the province to take a giant synchronized crunch into a locally grown Ontario apple. Nearly 170,000 people from across the province took part in this great event and

enjoyed delicious apples supplied by the Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association.

FoodShare is a fantastic organization in my riding of Davenport which for 30 years has had its doors open to increase access to healthy food and food education in our province. I'd like to personally thank executive director Debbie Field for all of her work on this very important cause.

Joining us at FoodShare that afternoon were grade 2 and 3 students from Brock Junior Public School. These students not only enjoyed some delicious Ontario produce but also participated in many hands-on food literacy activities and learned the importance of making healthy eating choices. It is truly very important for every one of us to make healthy eating choices in order to lead better and more fulfilling lives.

I'm proud to say that our government certainly understands the importance of FoodShare's services. Recently, FoodShare received an Ontario Trillium fund grant to support their new initiative to develop an urban agriculture and community-building model focused on collective planting.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that I could attend this wonderful event, and look forward to working together with FoodShare in the future.

ALMONTE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The Almonte General Hospital is suffering from a five-year budget freeze by the Liberal government. The hospital has done an excellent job of reducing costs, but it is not enough. This spring, they had to lay off 11 registered practical nurses.

I would like to invite all front-line health care workers, and those who support them, to join CUPE leaders Linda Melbrew and Michael Hurley with myself in front of my constituency office at high noon on Friday, March 27. We will tell the story of how this wasteful and big-spending Liberal government has cost our registered practical nurses their jobs and sacrificed the quality of health care at the Almonte General Hospital.

What a loss. What a shame.

SANCTUARY REFUGEE HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Over the March break, while visiting people and groups in my riding of Kitchener Centre, I had the privilege of meeting with Dr. Margaret Brockett and Dr. Michael Stephenson, who are directors of the Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre. The region of Waterloo has become a hub for new Canadians, including refugees. The Sanctuary clinic was founded in 2013 in response to this growing population.

The clinic serves some of the most vulnerable newcomers. Many of these people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence and persecution. When they arrive, they often have unique and complex health needs that require an integrated approach to care,

including psychological, economic and settlement help. Thanks in part to a grant that they received in 2014 from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the clinic has been able to hire a registered nurse and a social worker to offer public health and counselling services on-site.

At the Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre, no one is turned away. As a result, many patients are diverted from emergency rooms and walk-in clinics. Mr. Speaker, this is saving us money.

No one chooses to be a refugee, but as Ontarians we can choose what our response will be to our neighbours in need. I'm proud to tell you that the Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre is doing just that, and I thank them for their efforts every day.

FRANKLIN HORNER COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I am pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to speak about an event that I attended just a few hours ago in my riding: the annual Franklin Horner Community Centre's Seniors Health Fair.

I'm fortunate to have many facilities in my riding that serve the seniors of my community. One of these facilities is the Franklin Horner Community Centre. They have served the residents of Etobicoke for over 20 years as a non-profit charitable organization, and they have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of seniors throughout Etobicoke.

This community centre provides a range of programs, from dancing to bingo, socials, computer classes, fitness classes, and seniors' lunch-and-learn programs. The organization boasts over 1,200 members and 52 different subgroups that have programming there.

I'm particularly proud of their vibrant seniors' club and was fortunate to attend their health fair today. At the health fair, they featured a trade show, vendors, food and door prizes, but most significantly, a presentation about elder abuse and financial abuse of seniors. I was delighted to observe the well-received presence of Elder Abuse Ontario focusing their efforts on educating our local seniors with regard to bullying and financial fitness, as well as how they can protect themselves against fraud and scams.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Forster assumes ballot item 45 and Ms. Fife assumes ballot item 69.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OIL, GAS AND SALT RESOURCES AMENDMENT ACT (ANTI-FRACKING), 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RESSOURCES EN PÉTROLE, EN GAZ ET EN SEL (ANTI-FRACTURATION)

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to amend the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act to prohibit hydraulic fracturing and related activities / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en pétrole, en gaz et en sel en vue d'interdire la fracturation hydraulique et les activités connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill amends the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act to prohibit hydraulic fracturing. It provides the people of this province with a legal barrier to any cabinet that may want to allow it.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTH PROMOTION

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by welcoming some key special guests. I know I have the Canadian Cancer Society here, as well as the Ontario Lung Association, and up there in the gallery I know we have representation from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Welcome to all of you.

The Dietitians of Canada and the thousands of dietitians working here in Ontario help to promote healthy eating by celebrating Nutrition Month every year in March. This year, Nutrition Month is focused on eating well at work, with activities and events across the country to encourage Canadians to enjoy healthy food. I would like to acknowledge the important contributions of dietitians in helping the people of Ontario stay healthy. Dietitians also play a critical role in helping people to avoid chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease.

The dedicated people at the Heart and Stroke Foundation are also working hard to keep people healthy. Their healthy weight action plan, launched recently, was designed by experts to help people achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

As the associate minister responsible for wellness, I'm truly grateful to all our dietitians, as well as organizations like the Heart and Stroke Foundation, for their commitment to our population's health. We're all on the same page in believing that prevention is better than cure. That

is why our government has taken steps such as introducing the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, to help ensure that Ontarians have the information they need to make better choices about staying healthy. I'm very pleased that it's going to be debated later on this afternoon.

A part of this legislation relates to the posting of calories on menus in restaurants and other food service premises. Under the proposed legislation, food service premises such as restaurants, grocery stores and convenience stores with 20 or more locations in Ontario would have to post calories on their menus and menu boards. They would also have to provide other information, such as the average amount of calories an adult should be consuming in a day, to give context to the calories that are being posted. I believe this is powerful information that will actually empower Ontarians to make healthy choices when they eat out.

1520

Providing Ontarians with the information they need to make the right decisions about their health is also one of the pillars of our government's Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. We want to do everything we can to support Ontarians in taking charge of their own health.

Once again, to the members of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Lung Association, who have taken time to come out today, thank you for everything that you do, every single one of you for being here and for all of your hard work and advocacy on behalf of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Heart and Stroke Foundation, who are with us here to promote awareness and funds for heart and stroke research. I'd like to mention Lequin Lu, Yipeng Ge and Emily Wen, who came to my office today to further tell us about the Heart and Stroke Foundation's advocacy. They've been in existence since 1952, advocating for public discussion, research and education about heart health in Canada.

The foundation has raised and invested more than \$1.39 billion in heart disease and stroke research and works with 140,000 volunteers, almost two million donors, more than 600 full-time employees, and it receives no operational funding from government sources. I think that actually deserves a round of applause in the Legislature.

Applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I certainly commend them for their work. Because I'm a nurse, I have to throw some statistics out to you. The statistics attached to cardiovascular disease are alarming. Every seven minutes in Canada, someone dies from heart disease or stroke. Heart disease and stroke are two of the three leading causes of death in Canada, and heart disease and stroke account for 16.9% of total hospitalizations and cost the Canadian economy more than \$20.9 billion every year in services. So it is still a huge issue, but the numbers of people

affected by heart and stroke and cardiovascular disease have certainly come down due to partners like the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.

They did speak to us about Bill 45 before the Legislature, and we certainly agree that it's within this government's purview to promote health and wellness. We welcome all the efforts to improve public health for Ontarians. The legislation is designed to protect youth from the dangers of tobacco, by banning the marketing of tobacco products to children. This is, of course, an important step forward. But we also need to shut down illegal smoke shops. Ontario has a massive contraband tobacco problem. I've spoken about it for the better part of 10 years in this Legislature. It's a thriving black market, and it comprises anywhere from 30% to 50% of all tobacco sales in Ontario.

In 2009, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco did a cigarette butt analysis of 110 high schools in Ontario, and 30% were contraband. I think we can all see the young people outside the schools smoking in our ridings that we represent. They are the very people that tobacco laws are designed to protect and are some of the top customers in the contraband market. The presence of illegal tobacco in Ontario continues to undermine public health initiatives, taking away the tax revenue that could be spent on cessation programs. The necessary part of addressing tobacco consumption in Ontario is addressing the illegal market in a meaningful way, with real financial and legal consequences.

Bill 45 also speaks to the pressing issue of the rise in obesity here in Ontario. We all know it's no secret that almost half of our population does not meet the physical activity and healthy eating recommendations made by organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation. We need to seriously recognize that challenge. The trend continues to extend to our young Canadians, where 28% of children aged two to 17 are overweight or obese and face, of course, high risks of heart disease and high blood pressure because of that. I think we'd like to see a more wholesome strategy, like ramping up the daily physical activity for school-aged children. Physical education is where we need to be doing more, and I know that the Heart and Stroke Foundation supports this as well. I know that they have their Jump Rope for Heart which they initiate, which encourages kids to get active by skipping rope while they collect pledges for heart disease and stroke research. This program gives children the chance to jump and play alongside 750,000 other kids in more than 4,000 schools across Canada. Over the past eight years, the foundation has invested nearly \$3 million in strategic research in children and youth physical activity. So prevention plays an important role in decreasing heart disease in individuals.

I look forward to continuing to work with our trusted partners in the Heart and Stroke Foundation and developing responsible, sensible public policies that will improve our lives in the long term and help all of us to lead healthy, active lifestyles. So everyone go out and walk for at least 20 minutes today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few comments to the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. When it comes to celebrating, March is Nutrition Month, and although we are at March 25, I would say it's better late than never.

I'm really happy that the minister decided to make this statement, because nutrition plays such an important part in keeping people healthy. Whether you look at any of the chronic diseases that face millions of people in Ontario right now, most of them have a base in nutrition.

If we can get people to eat healthy food, have healthy weights, and add to this stop smoking and do exercise, 80% of cancer would disappear. It's worth repeating. How do we prevent 80% of all cancer? We all know people who have had a diagnosis of cancer, who have gone through treatment, some of them successfully and some of them not so much, but if we eat healthy food, have a healthy weight, stop smoking and exercise regularly, 80% of those hardships disappear instantly. This is why it's important to celebrate March as Nutrition Month. It's important to really take the time to educate people and think about what we eat.

We have a bill right now on the docket, the Making Healthier Choices Act, that would make a little step toward helping people make healthier changes. This step is really, really simple. When you will go to mainly big chain restaurants, on the menu board you will see, "Big Mac, \$3.99, 450 calories." It's as simple as this. If I have my way, Speaker, you would also see a little check mark that will tell you that this item has really high sodium, because the amount of salt that we eat is also directly related to a number of chronic diseases, whether we talk about hypertension or we talk about heart disease. They are closely related. Poor nutrition also has a direct impact on diabetes, on obesity, like the member before me was just talking about, and the list goes on and on.

I want to thank the Heart and Stroke Foundation for being here today, for coming to Queen's Park, for educating us and reminding us of how important it is to focus on prevention. They do—the foundation—fantastic work. Their education is bang-on. They have a very good communication strategy. Presently—I'll put a little pitch in for them—they're doing their big fundraising, so please support them as best as you can.

During the month of March, during Nutrition Month, on the radio station in Sudbury, every Thursday morning, the English CBC would have a dietitian on the program. It's called Morning North. They would have a dietitian who would basically take the opportunity in March to share some of the easy, little things that people can do to make healthier choices.

Today, she was talking about keeping a healthy snack in your car or in your purse so that when you are stuck in traffic, when you are coming home from work thinking about what you have to do to get supper ready and suddenly you get the munchies, rather than go quick through the drive-through for fries, if you have little baggies of nuts or fruits or something in your car—even

better if you've packed fresh fruits with you and keep them in your car or in your bag, you are a whole lot more likely—and throughout the month she put forward a number of tips that are easy to use that don't require extra money or anything to make things healthier.

1530

I know that the Lung Association as well as the Cancer Society are here with us. Not only does Making Healthier Choices talk about menu labelling with calories and, hopefully, sodium, but it also talks about flavoured tobacco. And we all know that tobacco is another one where if we can prevent more and more people from picking up smoking, it is a whole lot easier than trying to quit smoking. So let's hope this bill goes through, and thank you to the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Cancer Society as well as the Lung Association for being here.

PETITIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as ‘an extra payment covered by ratepayers over and above the actual market price of electricity’; and

“Whereas wind power is simply unreliable, blows mostly at night when we don't need power, creating a surplus Ontario then has to get rid of by paying Quebec and the United States to take it, and the total cost of producing the exported power was about \$2.6 billion more than the revenue Ontario received from exporting that power between 2006 and 2013; and

“Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has risen from \$700 million prior to the Green Energy Act to \$7.7 billion by 2013, and over the past decade, the cumulated amount is about \$50 billion; and

“Whereas Ontario now has the highest industrial rates in North America, and residential hydro bills are forecast to increase 42% by 2018 after peak hydro rates have already more than tripled since 2003; and

“Whereas local First Nations, property owners and aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders have voiced concerns about wind farm installations proposed by Innergex in Merrick and Mattawan townships in the riding of Rippling;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on these proposed wind projects and the government's expensive energy policy by cancelling feed-in-tariff (FIT) subsidies, implementing an immediate moratorium on wind power development, and giving municipalities veto authority over wind projects in their communities.”

I agree with this, Speaker, sign this and give it to page Alysa.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by the Ontario Health Coalition last night at a big forum they had in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services including hospital cleaning, and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including in-patient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care and the emergency department; and

“Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

“Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care across our hospital,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services;

“(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and ask Japneet to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Chris Ballard: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and hand it to page Ian.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakubuski: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as 'mostly consisting of the difference between the market price and the price paid to generators as set by the board for OPG or under contract with the government or the OPA'; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has been rising steadily over the last few years and is expected to continue to rise from \$700 million (prior to the 2009 passage of the Green Energy Act) to \$8.1 billion by 2014; and

"Whereas the Liberal government's 2010 fall economic statement stated that hydro bills are expected to rise 46% by 2015, and that new renewable power generation would account for 56% of that increase; and

"Whereas small to mid-sized businesses across Ontario are seeing the global adjustment portion of their monthly hydro bills increase significantly to the point that it is now larger than the actual energy portion of their bills; and

"Whereas many of those businesses are now delaying investment or hiring, or both, and considering either closing or moving outside of the province of Ontario as a result of delivered-to-market industrial energy rates that are now the highest in North America;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on its expensive energy policy by cancelling the feed-in tariff (FIT) subsidies and treating Ontario's energy as an economic development tool so that it once again is a competitive advantage for Ontario in retaining and attracting jobs and investment."

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Danielle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and may I say you did a wonderful job on television over the lunch hour. That theatrical makeup made you look years younger.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition that says:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I certainly agree with this, sign it and give it to page Rahul to take up to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member. That's the shortest petition I've ever heard. It was wonderful.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over 2,400 students and 450 Everest staff are impacted by the 14 college location closures across Ontario, putting a financial strain on students, employees and their families; and

"Whereas students have the right to finish their programs, avoid unnecessary delays with graduation dates and not incur further financial costs of having to apply to another accredited institution to complete their program; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has been aware of the financial and legal difficulties facing Everest College and the US parent Corinthian Colleges for months; and

"Whereas students cannot afford to put their life on hold while the government struggles to sort out the mess involving another private college;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To act in a prompt manner and protect the interest of Everest students by providing an extension for paying back OSAP loans, ensuring a full refund is provided and that students can complete their program without delay...."

I support this, will put my name on it and give it to Kari to bring to the desk.

1540

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's my pleasure to rise here today and read the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I will sign it and send it down to the table with Connor.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Jim Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

I sign my name to this and give it to page Demily.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year.”

It's my pleasure to support this petition and give this to page Japneet.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: I've got many of these petitions on the carbon tax.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and almost \$700 more per household annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas this uncompetitive tax will not impact businesses outside Ontario and will only serve to accelerate the demise of our once strong manufacturing sector; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I agree with this and will be passing it to page Thomas.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mrs. Léa Pilon, who lives in Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To do all in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

“To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Alysa to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have here a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled, "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water."

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I am putting my signature to this petition and will hand this over to page Ranen.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 11, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / *Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This was last debated by Mr. Tabuns, from Toronto—Danforth.

Further debate?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the member from Newmarket—Aurora.

I rise today in order to speak in support of Bill 45, making healthier choices. As members of this House may remember, this is the third time this legislation has been proposed and tabled in the Legislature, and we hope that this time it passes due to the daily impacts and long-term importance it will have on Ontarians' lives.

Our government is dedicated to helping families make healthier lifestyle choices. This is supported by Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and to grow old. We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults. A healthy start is better for our kids and it's better for our health care system. The healthier our kids are, the less likely they are to develop a chronic disease later in life.

The proposed menu-labelling legislation is a key component of Ontario's Healthy Kids Strategy, which responds to the Healthy Kids Panel's recommendations for reducing childhood obesity. The Ontario government is committed to these changes and therefore has reintroduced this menu-labelling legislation.

These changes will make it easier for families to make informed and healthier food choices and to give them the right information at the right place and time. More specifically, this menu-labelling legislation will require calories to be posted on menus and menu boards in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service premises selling prepared food with 20 locations or more in Ontario.

We know that research shows having many labels at the point of purchase increases awareness of nutrition information and influences consumer behaviour. If passed, Ontario will be doing more by: raising public awareness about the calorie content of foods eaten outside the home, making it easier for people to make healthier choices when dining out, and encouraging industry to offer healthier items and reformulate high-calorie menu items.

1550

This legislation has been well thought through. As I mentioned previously, these proposed changes are part of the government's Ontario Healthy Kids Strategy, which follows the advice of sector experts on the Healthy Kids Panel. The government also consulted with the restaurant, food services and retail sectors to design and implement menu-labelling legislation.

Additionally, leaders in the medical community have offered their support. Dr. Scott Woolder, former president of the Ontario Medical Association, says, "Ontario's doctors have long supported menu-labelling legislation. Calorie labelling will have an impact on what people eat who are concerned about their health, and we urge that all parties support its quick approval."

When we look at the evidence, the legislation makes sense. We need to remember that nutrition-related health risks are high, but avoidable. Nutrition-related illnesses cause approximately 48,000 deaths annually in Canada, due largely to stroke, heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Childhood overweight and obesity rates have nearly tripled nationally over the last three decades and have persisted over the past 10 years, with 28% of Ontario's children and over 40% of aboriginal children being overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is a significant health concern in Ontario and impacts health in childhood and beyond: 75% of obese children grow up to become obese adults.

In 2009, the economic costs of physical inactivity and obesity in Ontario were estimated at \$4.5 billion per year. These costs cannot be ignored. Currently, Canada's voluntary menu labelling is ineffective. In 2006, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association launched its voluntary nutrition information program. However, we need to move from this optional reporting system to one that is effective, accountable and enforceable.

Something to recognize is that if the legislation passes, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to legislate menu labelling. Menu labelling is about providing information, building awareness and ensuring that Ontarians have the insights they need to make healthy choices for themselves and their children.

This legislation is about taking the next crucial step in our government's efforts to protect Ontarians' health. This is more than giving families the information they need to make a healthy choice; it is about ensuring that our children and future generations are supported when navigating the food environment we live in and making the choices that benefit them and all of Ontario.

I urge all members of this House to support Bill 45.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to speak to this very significant and precedent-setting piece of legislation, Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent amendments to this legislation are particularly significant, as they propose swift action to ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthol. This is a substantial proposal, because we know that flavoured tobacco products have been proven to function as a gateway to permanent tobacco use and addiction. In fact, a recent study conducted in 2013 reported that one in four high school students has tried or smoked menthol cigarettes at least once every 30 days. We know that flavoured tobacco is marketed to our youth, and that's why this legislation is so significant: We are preventing future generations of Ontario youth from facing the problem of addiction to tobacco.

This is not the only action we are taking on the smoke-free front. Our government worked hard to toughen tobacco laws, ban smoking in public places and encourage more Ontarians to completely quit tobacco. The new issue that is evolving, which is the use of e-cigarettes, is

an emerging trend in Ontario, and there are concerns about the possible health effects of e-cigarette use, especially on our young people, as well as implications for tobacco use prevention and cessation.

At this time, there's limited research on the effectiveness of e-cigarettes to help people quit smoking. As a result, our government will be funding research projects to learn more about e-cigarettes, which will enable us to make more informed future decisions.

Bill 45: This legislation will ban the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under 19 and require retailers to request ID from anyone who appears to be under 25 and wishes to purchase e-cigarettes, and they'll be posting signs to explain the age-based restrictions.

However, it's also imperative that the federal government take action to regulate e-cigarettes and enforce the existing prohibition of nicotine in these products.

Mr. Speaker, banning flavoured tobacco and e-cigarettes is not the only reason this bill is so important. There are many other components that make it a necessary and important step forward for the health of Ontarians.

When we speak about healthy choices, the conversation is not just about what we choose to keep out of our system, but about how smart we are about what we choose to consume. I'm pleased that this bill also includes provisions to improve Ontario's health through menu labelling.

We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults. The crux of raising healthy children is educating them about the content of their food. This is a daily discussion in my house, as I try to convince a five-year-old to eat all her vegetables and fruit. But I'm not so much worried about what she consumes at home; I'm more worried about what she might consume out of the home when she's with her friends.

We know that when kids learn about eating healthier early in life, they're less likely to develop diseases or other health complications in their later years. That's why this government is proposing that food service providers with 20 or more locations in Ontario be mandated to post caloric information about their prepared foods on menus and menu boards. I'm pleased that this applies to grocery stores and restaurants throughout Ontario.

I know that both the tobacco use and menu-labelling components of this legislation will make the constituents in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore very happy. I often speak with families who are concerned about a wide range of issues that impact their children, including tobacco addiction and childhood obesity.

I believe the actions outlined in this legislation are measures that Ontarians will rely on us to implement well. I know my constituents will be pleased to hear about how they can be even more informed about what they choose to eat. I'm very proud to be a member of a government that continues to take swift action to keep Ontario healthy.

I hope my colleagues on all sides of the House will join me in supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, and share my time with the Minister of Community and Social Services and the member from Etobicoke–Lake-shore, as well as the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Speaker, there are glaring statistics and data that continue to confront us around healthier choices and around the use of tobacco products and tobacco-related products in the province of Ontario. We need to do all that we can, as a province and as a government, to ensure that we are raising the standards of health care and supports in the province of Ontario.

Just as a point of information, I think it's helpful to put it in context. Through the combined efforts of the province and the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, tobacco use prevalence has decreased from 24.5% in 2000 to 18.1% in 2013, representing 332,361 fewer smokers. Ontario currently has the second-lowest prevalence rate after the province of British Columbia.

Speaker, I want to take a minute and highlight a couple of the key elements of the legislation and express my support for them and why it's necessary for us to move forward with this legislation. I understand that all parties in the Legislature today are supportive of this legislation, which is great news for the people of Ontario.

We're moving forward with the proposed legislation and regulations that will strengthen our ability to reduce youth exposure to tobacco products. The Making Healthier Choices Act is not simply a reintroduction of our previous legislation, but the act has a number of new initiatives to help accomplish our government's goals.

1600

The proposed act would ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthol. Flavoured tobacco products have proven to be a gateway for tobacco use among young people. Canada's 2012-13 Youth Smoking Survey found that one in four high school students who have reported smoking have smoked menthol cigarettes in the past 30 days. Recent research in Ontario shows that menthol's cooling effect reduces the harsh taste of tobacco, making it more tolerable for new smokers and making youth more likely to become habitual smokers. The new research is why the government is proposing to include menthol in its ban of flavoured tobacco.

Approximately 18,500 young Ontarians in grades 9 to 12 use menthol tobacco products. I find that somewhat staggering, Speaker. I know the numbers have continued to decline, and as someone who spent 10 years in education and taught high school in a couple of different schools in the Sault Ste. Marie area, I'm certainly well familiar with young people who took up the use of tobacco products. You often try to educate young people about the harmful effects of this and making these life-altering choices at a young age and the implications that it will have later on to their health and well-being. So any way we can continue to educate people, to raise awareness and reduce the likelihood that a young person will take up smoking, is positive news for them and for all Ontarians.

An Ontario survey indicated that 121,600 Ontario youth in grades 9 to 12 had used tobacco products in the last 30 days, of which 55,300 used flavored tobacco products in those 30 days, so again, numbers that are fairly significant.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen our Smoke-Free Ontario Act by increasing penalties for selling tobacco to kids and making those penalties in fact the highest in the country. We hope that this will be coming into effect, if passed, on January 1, 2016. Stores and retail outlets would need to comply with the legislation.

I think it's also worth mentioning the implications with relation to e-cigarettes, which are also gaining some level of prevalence. We've worked hard to toughen tobacco laws, banning smoking in public places and encouraging more Ontarians to quit altogether. The use of e-cigarettes has emerged as a trend in Ontario, and there are obviously related health effects to that. We want to ensure there are restrictions in place in this legislation that will help ensure the diminished effects of e-cigarettes in the province of Ontario.

I want to also take a moment briefly to highlight the importance of menu labelling. I think this is a great initiative. We talk about the youth in Ontario being the future of the province. Healthier young people would make healthier adults; we all know that. That's why we introduced and constructed the Healthy Kids Panel. They provided us with invaluable advice, and we're moving forward on many of the panel's recommendations to help strengthen awareness around caloric intake with the requiring of menu labelling in the province.

I'm going to stop there, Speaker. I wholeheartedly support the bill. I think it's a great piece of legislation and I obviously welcome the support from the opposition members.

I'll turn the floor over to my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and move to the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I thank those speakers who have gone before me. They have all made very important and valid points regarding Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I want to add to a number of comments they made and reinforce a number of comments they made as well about this important piece of legislation.

Some of the highlights I want to go over again: This government is committed to keeping Ontarians healthy. As a government, we have pledged to reduce tobacco use prevalence to the lowest in the country. That's why the government is moving forward with proposed legislation and regulations that will strengthen our ability to reduce youth exposure to all tobacco products.

The Making Healthier Choices Act is not simply a reintroduction of previous legislation. The act has been amended to include new initiatives to help accomplish our government's goals. The proposed act is looking to ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthol, as previous

speakers have mentioned. I'm not a smoker, Mr. Speaker, but I know from friends who are that when we were young, mentholated cigarettes were the cigarette of choice because they weren't harsh and I guess they tasted great. Most of my friends who smoked started with mentholated cigarettes. So I'm delighted to see that we'll make sure those won't be in the Ontario marketplace in the future for young people to get hooked on.

Shocking statistics: Canada's 2012-13 Youth Smoking Survey found that one in four high school students who report smoking have smoked menthol cigarettes in the past 30 days. I think that reinforces my days in high school and what I recall.

In fact, recent research in Ontario shows that menthol's cooling effect reduces the harsh taste of tobacco, as I said, making it more tolerable for new smokers. That, frankly, is just not acceptable. This new research is why the government is proposing to include menthol in its ban on the sale of flavoured tobacco.

We're also told that approximately 18,500 young Ontarians in grades 9 to 12 use menthol tobacco products. This same survey also indicated that 121,600 Ontario youth in grades 9 to 12 have used tobacco products in the past 30 days, of which 55,300 have used flavoured tobacco products in the past 30 days.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen our Smoke-Free Ontario Act by increasing penalties for selling tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada, and strengthening enforcement to test for tobacco use in indoor places. Testing for the presence of tobacco will help inspectors ensure that water pipes are not being used to smoke tobacco indoors.

Should this bill pass, tobacco retailers and distributors will have until January 1, 2016, to comply with the ban on flavoured tobacco.

I just wanted to take a minute and shift gears and discuss menu labelling. I know that in previous experience working for a consumer advocacy group we heard often, as we were looking at federal regulations about food labelling, about that unhealthy trinity of salt, sugar and fat, and that if you wanted to make a salt-reduced product, you increased the sugar or fat or both, and that worked for all three of them—and how important it is for consumers to have the information they need to make informed choices. It has been shown, Mr. Speaker, that when people are given information, they will make the right choices.

We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults and that a healthy start is better for our kids and is better for our health care system. That's why the Ontario government has reintroduced this legislation, which will make it easier for families to make informed and healthy food choices and give them the right information at the right time and place. This proposed menu-labelling legislation requires calories to be posted on menus and menu boards in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service premises selling prepared foods with 20 or more locations—a good piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to full support in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to do a short two-minute response to the several members from the government side that found the time to speak on this bill today.

Bill 45 has laudable goals; there's no question about that. The Smoke-Free Ontario Act—a great idea. We would all be better off if there was no smoking whatsoever. But there's not a darn thing in this bill about how we're going to deal with the scourge of contraband tobacco, which accounts for between one third and 50% of the tobacco out there on the market today. What are they doing about that? Not a word. They just turn a blind eye to what's going on, and that's a huge problem.

As far as menu labelling: "It's wonderful; it's great." It's not going to do anything. If you really want to deal with the issue of obesity in our society, there has to be a lot more emphasis on physical fitness and exercise. Because somebody reads that there are X number of calories in something—listen, they've already grown a taste for it; they're going to go ahead and eat it. But it's what they do to burn those calories off that is really going to matter in our society. We've become way too sedentary. How many people actually have to work hard physically to make a living today? Very few. It's not like the old days, where you had to work from dawn till dusk to be able to put that food on the table. Now the problem is that we have too much access to easy food and we don't do enough physical exercise or labour to burn that food off.

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That's the challenge that is facing society today, not just here in Ontario but across the developed world. They're still starving in the underdeveloped world, but here life's too good, when you think of it. And if we don't exercise more, we will not deal with the problem. We've got to get people to get off their duffs and exercise more. That's the key.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand in the House today and comment on the Making Healthier Choices Act.

It was said that this is not just a compilation of previous bills but it does build on a long history of our health critic, Ms. Gélinas from Nickel Belt, bringing forward these issues to this House. I have to say, I'm encouraged that so many of those ideas are contained within the bill.

There are some gaps, though, that we have to be cognizant of. The government claims that menthol tobacco products will be banned, but the bill says nothing about menthol specifically, and it includes an exemption clause, section 3 of schedule 2, that the government can invoke to exempt certain flavoured tobacco products. Now, they say they're going to do it, but they do say a lot of things, Mr. Speaker, and so I think we have to be cognizant of that. I'm definitely encouraged by some of the ideas the member from Nickel Belt embedded in it.

The e-cigarettes issue, quite honestly, is a growing issue, but you know what else—and hopefully this bill can be amended once it's passed, because obviously we're going to support it—chewing tobacco is making a comeback for youth. Sometimes people call it snuff. This is something that is becoming very popular and, once again, it's highly addictive, and so there has to be a very progressive education campaign along with e-cigarettes and the flavoured cigarettes. Just in Kitchener-Waterloo alone there have been four new vape stores that have opened up. These are businesses that are looking to sell this product and move the product quickly. I think we have to be cognizant of the fact that once youth start to practise smoking, they're smokers in training, and I think that the precautionary element of the bill needs to be more aggressive around e-cigarettes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, second reading.

It is very well known that smoking and tobacco are the major cause of lung cancer. Its health effect is devastating and most people who smoke cigarettes develop lung cancer. This costs a lot of money for the province of Ontario and for every jurisdiction around the world. Also, its human misery is unimaginable. It's well known in the scientific community that about 85% of lung cancer is due to smoking cigarettes, and of course second-hand smoke increases the risk of one developing lung cancer.

As I said, 85% of lung cancers are due to smoking cigarettes. In order to prevent that in the province of Ontario, this government brought in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and we banned smoking cigarettes in public locations. This is something which we have done and it has helped us quite significantly to reduce the sale and also the use of cigarettes in public jurisdictions as well as in homes.

This act will ban, basically, the sale and supply of cigarettes to anyone under 19 years. It's also going to ban the promotion and display of e-cigarettes in places where e-cigarettes and tobacco products are sold. It will also prevent the owner or operator of a place of entertainment from employing or authorizing anyone to promote e-cigarettes or the sale of e-cigarettes at their places of entertainment.

Interjections.

Hon. Reza Moridi: E-cigarettes are a precursor for smoking, so by banning e-cigarettes we are going to prohibit people from smoking in the future.

I'm glad that I'm supporting this bill, and I urge everyone in this House to support this bill and to vote for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. A little noisy over there.

Questions and comments? The member from Nipissing. I hope you can hear yourself with your friends beside you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: With Garfield behind me? Well, it will be a challenge, but I'll struggle through it, Speaker. Thank you.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this. Look, as my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke stated earlier, it's harmless. Of course this is a bill that you can support with amendments—hopefully, a few amendments that we are going to propose—because it doesn't really get to the nub of the problem, the core of the problem.

You're going to ban menthol cigarettes, and all that is going to do is encourage people to go and get their menthol cigarettes on the reserves. That's exactly what this is going to do. We have a huge problem with contraband tobacco today, and all this bill will do for people 21 and over, or people 19 and over, is send them to the reserve to buy their contraband tobacco and buy their menthol and flavoured cigarettes on the reserve.

Let me tell you: One of the associations, the convenience stores association, did a survey last year and again this year. They came to many communities. North Bay was one. They went to my old high school, Scollard Hall. They collected the cigarette butts from the smoking area. They shovelled them up, put them in bags and trucked them down to Toronto, and students went through them all. It was an astounding number: Between the hospital, Chippewa high school and Scollard Hall—my high school—we're talking, in one instance, about 42% of cigarette butts being a Putter's brand, which is from a First Nations reserve. By the way, these schools are miles from the nearest reserve.

All this is going to do is take the people who want to smoke menthol cigarettes and who are of legal age—it's going to make them and force them to get what they are addicted to from the reserve and add to the contraband tobacco problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Newmarket-Aurora has two minutes.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's my pleasure to spend the final two minutes talking about Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I am delighted to hear the general support for Bill 45 from all parties here today. I mean, how can you not talk in favour of helping to stop young people from smoking and helping young people and families from eating improperly?

A couple of comments, again, about mentholated cigarettes: What the studies have shown the government, and the reason the government is encouraged and motivated to crack down on mentholated cigarettes, is that they are the gateway cigarette for many young people. If these don't exist nearby, chances are they won't be smoking, and they will not progress to being addicted to cigarettes. Those who are will probably find their cigarettes somewhere, but I think our focus is making sure that young people don't have easy access to mentholated cigarettes, which are the gateway cigarette of choice.

With regard to menus in restaurants, as I've said previously, all the research from a consumer advocacy perspective shows us that when consumers see choice, when

they have the information, they make the right choice. I disagree, quite frankly, about it being simply more exercise that's needed. I've heard a good phrase this afternoon: Bodies are made in the kitchen, not in the gym. I wholeheartedly agree, and I'm so looking forward to this legislation passing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure again to rise today and speak to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2015.

Bill 45 is actually made up of three separate schedules. The first part of the bill is called the Healthy Menu Choices Act, and I'll discuss this section near the end of my remarks.

Schedule 2 consists of assorted amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Now, this act is certainly in need of amending, as it currently leaves many Ontarians unprotected from second-hand smoke, even in the workplace, despite the aim of the original legislation.

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The final part of Bill 45 deals with a new and interesting issue: e-cigarettes. There is no reason for a child to be smoking a cigarette, electronic or otherwise. Banning the sale of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19 is simply common sense.

The debate around e-cigarettes has in fact been intense, with scientists coming out on both sides of the issue. Last year, more than 50 public health experts and nicotine experts, including five Canadians, sent an open letter to the World Health Organization, urging them not to classify e-cigarettes as tobacco products. They argued that doing so could jeopardize a significant health innovation that could save hundreds of millions of lives.

David Sweanor, a law professor at the University of Ottawa who works on tobacco control, was one of that letter's signatories. In an interview, Professor Sweanor stated, "We're here to try to get rid of cigarettes, we're here to try to make cigarettes obsolete and we have the potential with technology to start to do that, and that would be one of the biggest breakthroughs we've ever had in public health."

Well, several weeks ago I met with Michael Perley, director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco. Since health care is the number one expenditure for the provincial government, we need to continue to push to lower health care costs by improving people's health. I think we can all agree that legislation on e-cigarettes is sorely needed.

There have to be restrictions in place for the sale of these products to minors, or these cigarettes could potentially normalize smoking to minors who may not know that there are in fact risks to e-cigarettes. I welcome the restriction on the sale of e-cigarettes to those 19 years of age and older, which will hopefully stop the rising number of children who are vaping.

This is especially concerning considering the variance in chemical composition of nicotine liquid from one manufacturer to another. Speaker, there have also been

reports suggesting that people who smoke high-voltage e-cigarettes have greater exposure to formaldehyde. There's no regulation. One cigarette might be very low in it, but the one right beside it could be very high in it, and that in itself is not helping.

At the same time, we should be careful not to go too far and discourage adult smokers from using e-cigarettes as a tool to wean themselves off traditional cigarettes. A recent CBC News article stated, "Most experts believe they are less toxic than combustible cigarettes." However, there is very little long-term data available. What we don't want to see is an alternative to smoking traditional cigarettes banned outright. Thankfully, this legislation simply brings regulations on e-cigarettes closer to the regulations around regular cigarettes.

There are also numerous stores that only sell e-cigarettes, and several owners have voiced their concerns with this bill. The bill states, "No person shall, in any place where electronic cigarettes are sold or offered for sale, display or permit the display of electronic cigarettes in any manner that would permit a consumer to view or handle an electronic cigarette before purchasing it." Now, obviously, this is concerning for specialty stores that only deal with these products, as the customers won't be able to view or handle different e-cigarettes before they're purchased.

So let me state again that I am in favour of this bill and I am in favour of placing restrictions on e-cigarettes. It's the Wild West out there right now, Speaker, and people can smoke or vape whatever they please. Restaurants and hotels are just two groups that have asked for regulations to be placed on e-cigarettes so they will no longer have to argue with customers or guests who insist on smoking or vaping indoors.

There are also no laws forbidding the sale of these products to minors. That obviously must change. But we need to discuss negative impacts of the bill in addition to the many positives.

While Bill 45 seeks to address some of the problems in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, there are a few issues that the bill still does not address. A constituent of mine, and I'll leave his name out of the record for his sake, has been having issues regarding second-hand smoke at the workplace for the last several months. At the constituent's workplace, a smoking area has in fact been designated outside—

Miss Monique Taylor: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Sorry, member. I don't believe we have a quorum, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Clerks' table?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is present. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: At the constituent's workplace, a smoking area has been designated outside of the work-

place. However, the smoking area is set up beside the large garage doors so smoke drifts right into the building. All the while, management tells them that they are in compliance with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and, because of the lack of clarity in the legislation, they are technically correct. I was shocked when I looked over the existing Smoke-Free Ontario Act and saw that it does not cover these sorts of issues.

In the eyes of my constituent, as it is currently written, the law basically does nothing. All it does is inconvenience smokers without even protecting people from second-hand smoke. What good does it do to force people to smoke a couple of feet away from a massive open door? Smoke doesn't care what provincial legislation has been passed; it just keeps drifting along.

This issue is not limited to this constituent. Many workers around the province also find themselves in a similar scenario on a daily basis. You don't have to look far for examples.

Expert tobacco researchers right here in Toronto who assess and evaluate the progress of smoking legislation each year have found that the province's tobacco strategy is not protecting everyone. The most recent report was released in January. The report stated that "too many Ontarians continue to be exposed to second-hand smoke in a variety of settings." Specifically, 29% of workers reported being exposed to second-hand smoke indoors or outdoors in the workplace within the past 30 days. The study also found that more than half the population continues to be exposed outdoors, with 49% reporting exposure to second-hand smoke at entrances to buildings, and 58% reported exposure on sidewalks and in parks.

My constituent and many other workers are put in a very awkward situation every day. They're forced to ask colleagues to move further away from entrances, or they have to bring up the issue with superiors. Obviously this doesn't make them the most popular employees in the workplace, and I'm very empathetic towards that.

Right here at Queen's Park, if you want to have a cigarette, you'd better be well away from the doorway. They have specific policies in place right here.

Unless a company decides to initiate a smoke-free policy, employees are free to smoke near doorways or air vents. Perhaps Bill 45 should be amended to provide greater clarity when it comes to where exactly smoking areas must be located in the workplace.

I can't recommend any specific regulation or requirements in terms of distance. That's best left to the government and ministry experts, but the problem has to be noted and it has to be addressed.

By having proper legislation in place, it will in fact save people not only from exposure to second-hand smoke but it will prevent them from having to alienate themselves from colleagues who happen to be smokers.

Protecting the health and well-being of our children is always our number one concern. If that is our goal, simply banning e-cigarette use will not be enough.

Drinking alcohol is prohibited for all Ontarians under the age of 19, but most Ontarians have already had a

drink by the time they become of age. The 2013 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey found that one out of every two students from grades 7 to 12 have actually had an alcoholic drink in the past year. Banning something is not the only tool required to cut down on usage. So just like under-age drinking, banning the use of cigarettes and e-cigarettes for minors will not be enough. More concrete steps must be taken to lower the overall rates of smoking, especially amongst children.

As has been previously mentioned by members during debate on this bill, we should also target illegal smoke shacks, which are an easy way for children to get very cheap cigarettes. If these products are banned while illegal alternatives are easy to come by, all that regulation will do is penalize those who play by the rules and follow the law and help those who choose to operate outside of the law.

You know, Speaker, in my riding—but in many ridings—there are many of these illegal smoke shacks that are up and operating. Of course, people will literally go out of their way to buy these illegal cigarettes. My question is: What's in those cigarettes as well? Are there regulations? No, there are no regulations on the type of tobacco that may be in there, but they buy them because the cigarettes are absolutely cheap and the money—well, who knows where that money goes? But I guarantee you this: The government isn't getting any of the tax revenue from those illegal smoke shacks.

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Speaker, I'd also like to switch gears for just a minute and talk about another key piece of Bill 45: schedule 1, the Healthy Menu Choices Act.

When you look at the nutritional information at popular chains, the numbers can be shocking. Guess which has more calories and fat: a Tim Hortons whole-grain carrot-orange muffin or a Timmy's maple dip doughnut. Are you ready? The whole-grain carrot-orange muffin has more calories.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You've had some of those. I know that for a fact.

This muffin has more calories, more fat and more sugar than the maple dip doughnut.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Don't worry; I've had a few of those myself. It's okay.

Interjection: But not lately.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: But not lately; you're right.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It was.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm glad we're all sharing our menus. Can we get back to the debate? Thank you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. The whole-grain carrot muffin has more calories, fat and sugar than the maple dip doughnut—and it's not even close. The maple doughnut comes in at 190 calories, six grams of fat and 11 grams of sugar. But get this: That whole-grain carrot-orange muffin, on the other hand, comes in at not

190 calories, not 250 calories, but 350 calories—imagine that—and a whopping 11 grams of fat and 26 grams of sugar. When we think we're having a muffin and it's a healthier choice—not so sure. So the next time you're at a Tim Hortons, remember to get a doughnut as a healthier choice over the muffins.

As shocking as that is—and that was only the first popular chain that I looked at—I'm sure that there are plenty of other astounding examples such as this in other chains as well. That's why it's so important for us to make sure that people have the proper information to ensure that they are making truly healthy choices. Using the previous example, a lot of people would probably pick up a muffin over a doughnut and think that they're actually making a healthier choice.

To be fair, the Tim Hortons muffin also contains six grams of dietary fibre and 20% of your daily intake of vitamin A. So we're trying to balance that off a little bit. But surely, many would be surprised that a doughnut has less calories, fat and sugar.

They're obviously getting a big plug. I don't know whether their RRRoll Up the Rim to Win is still going on or not. But if you have a choice of a muffin or a doughnut, take the doughnut.

Bill 45 also seeks to give more information to Ontarians who are simply looking to make healthier choices. Anything that makes it easier for Ontarians to make healthy choices is a good thing, in my opinion. It turns out that a lot of Ontarians share that opinion. As a matter of fact, in the year 2011, an Ipsos Reid poll found that approximately 95% of Ontarians supported requiring fast-food restaurants to list their nutritional information on the menus. They have to read it; then they have to decide whether they're going to believe it; and once they decide they're going to believe it, then they have to make that healthier choice, and of course, many already do.

Roughly 60% of large chain restaurants with more than 20 locations in Ontario already provide nutritional information voluntarily to their customers. They provide this information either on demand, on websites or directly in the store. As a matter of fact, I have seen it at a McDonald's, where they have the menu listed as well. I think that's a good thing. People need to make those healthier choices.

Speaker, if Bill 45 is passed, it will require owners and operators of regulated food service premises to display the number of calories in each standard food item sold at the premises as well as any other information required by regulation. Regulated food service premises are food service premises that sell meals for immediate consumption and that belong to a chain with 20 or more Ontario locations, or that are brought under this act by regulations.

I'm sure that members on all sides of the House will agree that it's not always easy for us here in the Legislature to make healthy food choices. It's challenging at times, believe me. I probably have been living proof of that as well. But, you know, the reason for that obviously could be because we have hectic schedules.

Sometimes they force us to either skip meals or eat on the road, whatever the case may be. It's also difficult for our hard-working and talented Queen's Park staffers to make healthy choices all the time as well.

Just as a point of interest, over the Christmas break I made a healthy choice. I took advantage of some down time and started to make healthier choices. Thanks in large part to my wife, Dianne—I've got to give her a plug on this—I'm down a few belt notches since Christmas. In my plan, it's all about calorie count. Others have other plans but I chose calorie count. If you put in less calories than you burn off in a day—if I do the math—you're going to lose weight, and I have. It's really simple when you come right down to it.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The question was asked, how much have I lost. In three months, I've lost 45 pounds but I've gained 10 pounds in hydration, and I needed that. That's the one thing that people don't look at, their hydration levels.

Again, I looked at protein—gotta have protein, so I take a meal shake. Other proteins include fish such as whitefish, tuna, salmon, shrimp; even grass-fed beef. Of course, I love my veggies. I didn't eat a lot of carrots, though; that wasn't in it, but spinach and cabbage were, and I like that. And fruits, of course: I love apples, strawberries, oranges. It's all good stuff.

But here's the key, Speaker: controlled portions. That's what I had to learn. That's what I had to adjust my thinking to. I also, during all that, eliminated sugars, breads, pastas, pizza. However, gluten-free is okay—

Mr. Chris Ballard: Pasta?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I know. My Italian friends are screaming at me right now. Maybe they have gluten-free spaghetti. I'm sure they do—and minimal dairy products.

As I said earlier, in the three months I lost 45 pounds but I added 10 pounds in hydration, which is a good thing as well. And you know what? As Tony the Tiger would say, I feel great. Don't worry, I won't be auditioning for any Tony the Tiger commercials any time soon.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to conclude my remarks by again stating my support for Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. Labelling menus with calorie counts is certainly one part of the solution. It's a move that I personally support, and I look forward to being able to more easily see this information once this bill is passed. Calorie counts have been instrumental in my own efforts to make healthier choices. They will also help Ontarians make healthier choices.

I do want to add one thing, though. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in a two-minute question and answer, responding to one of our government colleagues, commented also on the importance of physical activity. I think that's also critical. Yes, I am working out more as well, because you've got to strengthen those muscle groups.

But, you know, when we talk about calorie counts, we talk about all this—this is only one tool in the toolbox that can be used to fight childhood obesity. Rates of

childhood obesity are on the rise, and we have to make it our public priority to address this issue today before it becomes a crisis tomorrow. In my opinion, we need a strategy to increase daily physical activity for our school-aged children. Physical education is an area where we can do a lot more for this province.

In conclusion, at the end of the day, it's up to Ontarians and not governments to make healthy choices. All we can do is empower them and give them the information they need to make their healthy choices. Bill 45, while not all-encompassing, is a good step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to stand in my place here this afternoon and speak to G45. As we know, in this case, the "G" stands for Gélinas, because the member for Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, has brought forth not seven, not eight, not nine, not 10 but 11 private members' bills on menu labelling and stricter tobacco control measures over the last few years. In fact, last August, she wrote the Premier, urging the regulation of e-cigarettes. So this bill should be named in honour of the member from Nickel Belt.

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If the government wanted this legislation, they could have brought it forth and they could have approved her first private member's bill in March 2009. In 2009, six years ago, this was first put on the table. She also talked about menu labelling in chain restaurants.

I know we're not supposed to use salty language in this chamber, so I'm putting you on notice right now that I'm going to say "sodium." I'm not going to say "salt." Why hasn't the government put sodium labelling and regulation in this bill and not just the calorie count? Because the salt is a killer. The salt can get you just as much as the calories. Let's not hide our head in the sand.

Earlier, one of the members talked about mentholated cigarettes. I have to tell you, I've been married this year for 40 years. I haven't smoked in more than 40, but years before that I used to smoke menthol, and for one reason only: If someone came up and said, "You got any smokes?" and I said, "Just a menthol," they said "No, no," and they'd go to somebody else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's an honour to speak on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

As most of us know in this chamber, our health care budget is over 40% of every dollar that we pay into taxes and it's increasing every year. A large part of that increase stems from the fact that people aren't making healthier choices and there is consumption of tobacco, predominantly cigarettes. So one of the steps that we're taking is making it difficult for our children and our youth to obtain cigarettes, especially the flavoured and the menthol cigarettes, because often the studies have shown that flavoured cigarettes and menthol cigarettes are the gateway for our children and youth to start smoking.

As well, in this bill we're discussing the need for menu labelling. As members before me have suggested, some of the wisest or the most careful people who watch their diet can let things get carried away and we don't realize exactly how many calories may be in such a small portion, so I think both of these initiatives will go a long way. The end goal is to make sure that our citizens, Ontarians, are healthier and they live to the maximum amount possible in the best of health. I think this bill will go a long way. I'm looking forward to the debate, and hopefully we'll all support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 45 and follow up the speech by our member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. He identified a lot of the problems that this bill identifies.

Basically, I agree with this bill. It identifies about three different areas of problems that relate to health care, and it's trying to help us make healthier Ontarians. I think we all have to agree with that. Smoking, of course, we've known for decades, if not 100 years, is bad for our health. The Heart and Stroke Foundation was in my office today, and they've been in many people's offices in this building. Earlier today they were in the gallery here. They have some excellent documents that they explained to me and brought to my office, identifying exactly what kind of trouble cigarettes cause. Basically they're trying to head off having young people encouraged to pick up the bad habit of smoking. E-cigarettes are part of that problem as a temptation because it's not a cigarette, but it is nicotine, so it creates that dependency on the addictive drug nicotine, which would lead to cigarettes.

Flavoured tobacco is another one of those attempts to appeal to young people. The packaging is even attractive. It looks like gum or candy. This is a terrible thing, that we have companies that are actually going to this length to make things look like candy, taste like candy, not be cigarettes, but really leading to addicting young people to become smokers so that they'll be buying cigarettes for the rest of their lives. That's an easy enough problem to identify. It's an easy enough problem to fix, which this piece of legislation will do.

The illegal cigarettes that come from the native folks here in this country, which is criminal activity, are unregulated. Unfortunately, what happens when legislation like this is created, and it's well-meaning, is we drive people to the criminal, illegal levels of tobacco.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm proud to stand and speak on Bill 45. You know, we've come a long way when it comes to health in Ontario and worldwide. We're all aware of what health is. We're all aware of what's healthy for us and what's not healthy for us, but yet we still actually have those vices.

When we talk about smoking, that is a vice that many people have tried to give up over the years. Some are successful; some aren't. I know there are people who are

chain smokers. There are people who quit and then three months later go back and start again. It's a very unhealthy habit.

I know one of our colleagues here in the NDP caucus put their mind to stop smoking. I can say congratulations to them; they are still not smoking. It's quite an accomplishment.

I met this afternoon with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The representative had some products from the flavoured cigarettes. She pulled two items out of her bag. Speaker, I could not tell the difference between a lip gloss and a flavoured cigarette. They were the same size; they were the same shape.

It's very clear, Speaker, that things have evolved in the smoking industry where they're targeting youth. They are getting smarter about marketing, who their target market is and how to bring them in. So I think this is a great step forward with regard to flavoured cigarettes. The packaging is completely misleading. It's certainly targeted for young people. It can be as young as 10 years old. Kids are very impressionable and they are exposed to many things. I think this bill is a great step to curbing that marketing targeting our youth for flavoured cigarettes.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Windsor—Tecumseh, Brampton West, Carleton—Mississippi Mills, and, of course, London—Fanshawe.

I was rather intrigued by the member from London—Fanshawe having difficulty seeing the difference between lip gloss and an e-cigarette. Try to smoke the lip gloss. I say that with terrible humour in mind.

But the serious element of this particular bill—as I mentioned earlier, it has three aspects: healthy menus, and I like the idea that calories, fat and sodium are going to be listed on bills, or on billboards, so to speak. I like the idea of smoke-free. Again, as I mentioned in my previous discussion or previous speech, I am not about to say that no-smoking areas have to be so many metres away. I think around hospitals and public buildings it's nine metres, but for private buildings and private property it's up to the management. So I encourage them to do something more serious about that. And, of course, we talked about e-cigarettes and flavoured cigarettes and how bad they are.

I just want to talk very briefly. I remember when the member from Nickel Belt actually presented her bill. I was so impressed with her presentation. I truly was. I thought, "You know what? This is very good." I actually sent her a note complimenting her on her presentation. Also, the chord she struck with me was the calorie count on there. She was singing right out of the same song book as I had.

One thing I mentioned earlier, having lost about 45 pounds since January 1, which is wonderful and I feel great, I talked about the importance of hydration levels. There's one thing that also helped, and I want to encour-

age people. Coconut oil is something that really will burn calories. It's a little bland, but do you know what? You can get used to bland. It's okay.

1650

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You're a Conservative. You're used to it already.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yeah, there you go.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a privilege to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill 45, because making healthier choices is not just good personal practice; it's good for our province. When it comes to health care, prevention should be a top priority—anything we can do to improve our health care and make it better for the future. We can live a more active and more productive life, but we can enjoy more of what the world has to offer. We can take some strain off our health care system so that it can focus more on some of the serious challenges that many face. An ounce of prevention is definitely worth a pound of cure.

This healthy choices act comes with three schedules, each addressing a particular initiative. Schedule 1 requires owners and operators of some restaurants to display the number of choices—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I believe the House has lost its quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Clerks' table?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll have to ring the bells.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Oh, look. Run; run.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is present. Thank you.

Continue.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's so nice that the members could join us, Speaker.

The healthy choices act comes with three schedules, each addressing a particular initiative. Schedule 1 requires owners and operators of some restaurants to display the number of calories in their menu items and allows other information to be included through regulation.

Schedule 2 amends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act in various ways: prohibiting the sale of promotional items with tobacco, outlawing flavoured tobacco with some exemptions, allowing inspectors to enter a broader range of places, and increasing fines and penalties for contraventions of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Schedule 3 attempts to address some of the issues around the growing use of electronic cigarettes: making them illegal for youth under 19 years of age, placing restrictions on the display and promotion of electronic cigarettes, regulation on where they can be sold—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I believe the House, once again this afternoon, has lost its quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Clerks' table?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is present.

Continue, the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I offer this overview because an awful lot of what is in this bill is quite familiar to us. It's familiar because many of these changes have been proposed in this Legislature before by my NDP colleague the member from Nickel Belt. I think it's somewhere around 11 different private member's bills that she has introduced. The government has been very slow to act on these measures, and they've been dragging their feet for far too long on the important matters that affect our health and our health care system.

I think it's important that we recognize the work done by the member for Nickel Belt, who has continually fought to bring thoughtful, meaningful private member's bills to make sure that the decisions on these issues are in the agenda. Her arguments were backed up by science and by supportive professionals here in Ontario, across Canada and internationally.

Speaker, about 12 years ago the World Health Organization said that nutrition labelling could be an important part of preventing the growing burden of non-communicable diseases. A broad range of experts and organizations offered their support to those private member's bills over the years: the Registered Nurses' Association, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Canadian Institute of Child Health, the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Ontario chronic disease association, the Ontario Medical Association—the list goes on and on. They are pretty powerful, informed voices, voices this government should have been listening to years ago.

I want to take a moment to talk about some of the initiatives in Hamilton in relation to healthy foods, Speaker. In 2011, Bill and Judy Wilcox decided to do something to provide good, nutritious food for low-income people in Hamilton. They believed that some of the empty lots in our city were just that, sitting there unused, could be sustainable sources of good food to alleviate the hunger and, in particular, the lack of healthy food. So the Hamilton Victory Gardens was born.

Starting with one lot and 2,200 pounds of food for the local food banks and hot meal programs in 2011, they now have, in a few short years, grown to 12 different locations across the city, tended by 250 volunteers, and an incredible annual harvest of now over 45,000 pounds of produce.

The innovative approach of the Hamilton Victory Gardens combines urban agriculture and charitable giving. It teaches students and volunteers about the sustainable methods they use. This is a program that strives to end hunger, and it does so in a way that promotes healthy eating and educates all those involved on how to get the most and the best out of our surroundings.

Another constituent of mine is named Al Nason. Al is a schoolteacher who spent a number of years working in developing countries, helping them to tackle the serious food issues that they face. As a teacher, he developed a program built around the building and operations of an aquaponics system. This system grows vegetables on top of a tank of water which contains fish. Al tells me that tilapia is the best fish for this. The fish, through their waste, provide the nutrition that allows the plants to grow—and, boy, do they grow.

A system like this can see vegetables grow to maturity in a much shorter time than it would take through a normal agriculture method. Also, being housed indoors, they can be grown year-round. Like most operations, there are benefits to having large systems, but small productive systems can be set up in your home. In fact, Al set up an aquaponics system in my constituency office. It was great to help promote the idea.

A very important element to the school program is that it engages students who don't fit neatly into the expectations of a regular school program. Kids who are struggling academically enter this program and see their lives turned around. Many have gone to college and university, driven by their newfound interest in local sustainable agriculture.

Al is a true believer. He spends countless hours all across Ontario promoting aquaponics and the possibilities it holds to address our food security. We are hopeful that he can fulfill his dream of creating self-sustaining systems throughout Ontario, creating partnerships with those organizations who take on the task of tackling hunger in disadvantaged households.

That's a couple of very positive examples from my community about what can be done to promote healthy food, but in general terms, there are clearly some problems with the diet of many Ontarians. One in four adults is obese: about 6.3 million people. Particularly worrisome is the fact that the number of obese people has increased by 17.3% since 2003. Nearly one third of Ontario's children are obese or overweight.

There has been extensive research into the effects of this. Excessive body weight is associated with numerous chronic conditions, including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, gallbladder disease and certain types of cancer. Statistics Canada has reported that obesity has become one of the world's greatest

health concerns and threatens to undo gains made in life expectancy during the 20th century. Eating the right foods has an impact on your physical health.

But there is a growing body of evidence that healthy food has an important influence on mental health. Dietitians of Canada said, in a 2012 report, "Many nutrition initiatives that registered dietitians help facilitate support mental health by enhancing social inclusion, self-reliance, self-determination, food security, healthy body image, and reducing health and social inequities."

1700

But following a balanced, nutritious diet isn't always easy, cheap or convenient. It's very difficult for many families to make ends meet on one income. Many people are having to work longer hours. With the growth of part-time jobs, there is—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We've lost a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Clerks' table?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is now present.

Continue.

Miss Monique Taylor: With the growth of part-time jobs, there are far too many people who have to juggle schedules to get to two or sometimes three or more jobs just to piece together one full-time wage. For some, travel time can account for half of the time they spend away from home on any given day. The demands of work and the growth of precarious employment means people have much less time to cook dinner and, inevitably, spend more time eating out.

Sixty percent of Canadians eat out one or more times a week. For 40% it's a few times a week, and 7% eat out every day. This is especially true for younger people. Many of those part-time jobs I mentioned are in the food industry, an industry that has become inundated with large chains offering fast food or prepared meals. Mom-and-pop country-style kitchens are increasingly being squeezed out of the market. They are being squeezed out by restaurants that often have high levels of calories and sodium in their meals. Sodium: Now, there's something that's strangely missing from this legislation, but I'll come back to that later.

It's been reported that the average sit-down meal in a restaurant has 56% of an adult's daily calorie requirement and 98% of an adult's daily limit on sodium. That's one meal in a restaurant. An additional problem is that the calorie and sodium levels are impossible to determine from restaurant to restaurant by just looking at what you're ordering. These levels can vary greatly for what is on the surface the exact same meal.

In one study, for example, it was found that calories in an order of ribs could be anywhere from 330 to 2,500. The same study found that a stir-fry in one restaurant

could have twice as much sodium as a similar dish in another. Or even more alarming, for sandwiches and wraps, there could be a 78-fold difference in sodium levels, depending on where you ate. Customers have a right to know about the ingredients in their meals, but it's also true that much of these differences are a result of a large portion offered at some restaurants.

I thought you were going to call quorum on me again, Speaker. Jeez, I was ready to sit down.

Large portions are perceived as a deal and that's exactly why they do it. Marketing folks know that customers want to believe that they're getting their money's worth, and for many that is often more important than getting the healthier choice.

We were all brought up—well, I know most of us, and in my family it was a definite that we had to eat everything that was on our plate. Think of those days, back in the Pink Floyd days, when you were listening to The Wall in your basement and the school teacher in the background saying, "If you don't eat your meat, you can't have any pudding. How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?" He said it twice just to drive the point home. So maybe it was our schoolteachers. Maybe we had parents who grew up during the Great Depression and the wars. But we knew that food was a scarcity and it was a precious commodity for everyone. Sometimes some families thought it was just manners to make sure that you ate everything on your plate. Perhaps, even though we ourselves are not short of food, we feel guilty about wasting food.

Whatever it is, it's in our makeup that we finish everything that is in front of us. So when we're in a restaurant and we are faced with a huge serving, we dutifully comply, satisfied in the belief that we got our money's worth and promising to return for more of the same at a later date, and with not a single care for the damage that we have just done to our body in the process.

Then, there it is in the fast food order: "Do you want fries with that? Will that be a combo?" I know of one place, and I'm sure I'm not alone, where you can get a chicken sandwich and fries for \$7.50. If you get a pop with that, it costs you \$6.50. That's right: The exact same meal with a good-sized pop thrown in is a dollar less. What sort of economic sense does that make? And for the customer, what sort of sense does it make not to take the deal? Once you've taken the deal, what sense does it make not to drink the pop, even though you didn't really want the pop in the first place? It doesn't make any sense until you consider that you've just added 300 to 500 calories more to your meal, about a quarter of the total calories you should have for an entire day.

What sense does it make to consume more calories when we have no reason other than it's there and we already have it? But that's the reality facing people when they eat out, and that's why we need menu labelling in restaurants. It needs to be done by law because, quite frankly, we can't trust businesses to do it out of their own goodwill.

Restaurant chains have been boasting for a few years about their commitment to making information available

on their meals. I was reading a report prepared by the city of Toronto on menu labelling. In it, they commented on a survey of 136 outlets of 27 chain restaurants in Canada. They were all chains that had committed to providing nutrition information. The survey found that 18 of those 27 chains provided nutrition information at some of their outlets. Only one chain had information available at all of the outlets surveyed. Unfortunately, the information they provided was in the tray liner, and you don't get a chance to look at the tray liner until you've actually ordered your food and you're sitting down to eat. Some restaurants put the information on their website, or on the back of the placemat, or in the brochure behind the counter, which you need to ask for. It is not easily accessible when deciding what to order.

That's why we need this type of legislation: rules that make them provide nutrition information that can be easily viewed by everyone as they decide what they are going to have.

I do think there is room for improvement in this bill. First, why does this legislation make no effort to include sodium levels in this mandatory reporting? Everything that I've read—expert opinions, calls for action—include sodium along with calories as being essential, effective menu labelling. That needs to change.

Why is there no reference to the recommended daily intake of calories and sodium? This legislation is, in essence, an awareness campaign, and many people simply do not know what dangerous levels are. To make the information truly meaningful to everyone, it seems obvious that we should be providing a yardstick for them to measure their intake by.

The final comment I have on this schedule of the act is to question why we are limiting this legislation to chains with more than 20 locations in this province. Not only that, why are we denying municipalities the ability to create bylaws that would improve menu labelling in their own communities? These items should definitely be addressed when this bill goes to committee. There's plenty of room for that improvement.

Speaker, there has been quite a significant culture shift with respect to smoking over the past number of years, and it has happened because of the research, huge awareness campaigns and legislative restrictions on how cigarettes can be marketed and consumed. Anybody who smokes finds it very difficult to be proud. There are few smokers who actually choose to smoke instead of preferring not to smoke. This shift has happened in the face of fierce lobbying by Canadian and multinational cigarette companies with very deep pockets.

The job is not yet done, because tobacco companies understand that their best marketing tool is addiction. They just need to get their foot in the door. We need to help our youth not be the next generation of smokers. We need to be aware of the ability and the agility of cigarette manufacturers to find ways to sell their products.

Back in 2008, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Brant co-sponsored a bill to ban the sale of individual flavoured cigarillos. The bill passed, but because it took time for the ban to be enacted, the to-

bacco companies were able to find loopholes and already had new products on the market. Flavoured cigarettes are nothing less than a blatant attempt by tobacco companies to target youth when they are the most amenable.

The health effects of smoking and second-hand smoke are well documented. From an economic point of view, tobacco-related diseases cost the Ontario economy at least \$1.6 billion in health care costs each year, and more than \$4.4 billion in lost productivity. They account for half a million hospital stays each year. So, yes, these further restrictions on flavoured tobacco products and promotional items should move forward.

1710

Another element of the act is the regulation of electronic cigarettes. They are a relatively new product but there are currently no age restrictions for buying or marketing them. That has to be a huge concern and we need to ensure that we are treating e-cigarettes the same as we are treating tobacco.

A further big concern is that there are very limited studies available on the health effects of electronic cigarettes. Here we have a product that is growing in popularity, but we are quite ignorant as to what people are putting in their bodies through their use. Like other members, I have heard from a number of people who have used electronic cigarettes to quit smoking. They argue strongly that they have tried unsuccessfully to quit many times. They firmly believe that e-cigarettes have enabled them to finally get off the cigarettes.

Speaker, I'm a former cigarette—I'm out of time. See how quickly it goes, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments. The Deputy Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Deputy Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, sorry.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you. I'm delighted to be able to speak for just a couple of minutes about this very important legislation. It was legislation that I introduced prior to the election and it has now been reintroduced and it's even stronger than it was, so I'm very, very pleased. I want to focus on the Healthy Kids Panel that was really the impetus of the healthy eating part of this legislation.

We know that our health care system is increasingly caring for people who, had they taken better care of themselves, would not be needing health care. So we need to focus on prevention. We need to focus on wellness. This is one more step in the right direction of giving people information they need to make the healthiest choice possible.

We appointed a Healthy Kids Panel, and they did a fantastic job. I really appreciated the approach they took. It's about giving parents the information they need to help make healthy choices for their kids. The reality, as we've heard from others, is that currently it's pretty hard to know when you go into a restaurant what the calorie content is in the food that is on the menu. To just give parents that little extra bit of information will help them make healthier choices.

My colleague just told me that he went into a pizza—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Extreme Pita.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Extreme Pita. They already have the calories posted. The member from Ottawa Centre actually changed his choice based on the calorie labelling. There was one pita available at 600 calories. He thought that was the best one, but then he changed it to one that had only 350 calories, a healthier choice made because this particular company, Extreme Pita, is ahead of the curve. They've already made the decision to give their patrons that information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the Deputy Premier.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Of course, we'll be supporting this bill, but we would like to see it go farther so that it actually gets some of the intended consequences. We're seeing cases where we make it tougher on our children to get things like some of the, I suppose, bad food in their schools and they just go elsewhere.

In our local high school there are so few people using the cafeteria that if there's a school trip somewhere or a sports trip, they actually close down the high school because there's not enough people going to eat in the cafeteria. They're going down the street. It's hard to get into a restaurant because they're buying the foods they like. That shows that you can do a lot of things and you think you're doing the right thing, but now the children are going down the street, spending more money and still buying the same foods. It comes down to really showing how our diets work, the use of education. I think it's commendable that they have the ability then to look at the calories in the food so that they can make their own choices.

As adults, we're very quick to have the food we like as well. I think if we start off right and have a knowledge of what foods are good and which ones are bad, we can make a difference and really change our habits, because it comes down to habits. Just by making something unavailable—just like cigarettes—in my area, the health unit has conducted studies, and in some of the schools, up to 90% of the cigarettes are contraband. It's a real problem, not only from the idea of the lost taxes, but it has become such an attractive way of making money. Our youth are getting involved with the drug trade, the cigarette trade, and they're getting sentences and they're getting records.

Again, if we're really going to have any impact, we have to go about trying to get at making the rules so that we have an impact on what's happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: An honour and a privilege to stand in the House today and make comments after those made by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who brings great passion to her work every time she stands in this House.

Speaker, she's a woman of great strength as well. She smoked for 28 years and, one morning a year and a half ago, woke up and said, "That's it. I quit," and she did.

She takes great pride in the people she represents, the people in her riding who looked at empty lots and said, "This would be a good place for a community garden." They went out and created Hamilton Victory Gardens.

Speaker, that reminds me so much, in my riding, of the Ray and Shirley Gould Community Garden at the Unemployed Help Centre in Windsor, as well as the Ford City Community Garden on Drouillard Road in Windsor.

As many of you know, at one time, Drouillard Road was a neighbourhood in decline, but it is now invigorated and a vibrant place to be, and a good deal of that credit goes to Steve Green, who started the Ford City Community Garden and then, from there, went down and reinvigorated the Windsor farmers' market in downtown. So, credit to both Steve Green and to Raymond and Shirley Gould.

I mention Shirley, Speaker. Last year, we lost Shirley. She was a real community activist, a community leader, and put her heart and soul into many activities, especially the Unemployed Help Centre and the community garden. I happened to be up here at a committee meeting and could not get to her services, and I've always regretted that.

It's people like Shirley and Raymond Gould and Steve Green who bring community gardens to our communities for fresh food for the people most in need. I hope this bill will help people eat better in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today, and great to hear from the members on the other side. I think what I'm hearing is that there appears to be support for Bill 45, and some suggestions as to how it could be made better, perhaps, or other things people would like to see included in the bill.

It strikes me that the reason we have this bill is that over the years—certainly in my lifetime—I've seen a change in the way that people eat and the choices they make in what they eat and the things they put in their body.

I grew up in a time when processed food was just becoming cool. Products like Pop-Tarts, powdered mashed potatoes and all sorts of strange things were just being introduced to the market. The people who were making the purchasing decisions at the time were deciding that these were pretty good things and they should feed them to their kids. I think in the fullness of time, we've realized that some of those products perhaps weren't the best products.

I know, as I was raising my own son, who is now 34, that my wife and I decided we didn't want him to eat at a fast food outlet that everyone here would know. It wasn't the food so much that was the hard part in keeping him away. It was the toy that came with the food. Everybody else in his class had a little action hero, and he didn't have one. But I still thought we were doing the right thing. I think what we found out about some of the products that are actually in that fast food outlet, and some of the changes that they've made along the way—

in hindsight, it was the right thing to do. I hope my 34-year-old son has gotten over not having that toy. I'm pretty sure that he has.

But this goes along with that. I think it's things we learn along the way. We've realized that how we keep ourselves healthy—that we've got responsibility, and some of that is entailed in the choices we make as to what we put in our own bodies. This just helps us along.
1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain has two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the Deputy Premier, the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh and the Minister of Labour for joining in on my portion of the debate today.

Yes, I was a smoker for 28 years. I was able to just wake up one day and say, "I'm not going to smoke today," and I stand here today and still have not smoked. But other people don't have that opportunity. We know that so many people struggle to quit smoking, and the e-cigarettes are something that people are finding their way with: "Well, I'm not inhaling smoke, so I'm doing okay." The problem is that they're still untested, so maybe that's something we can really push for, to make sure that we're getting that proper testing on these vapers and these e-cigarettes so that we know what people are ingesting. Then we can give them proper research and really identify what that's doing to their bodies.

I have to say that yes, I've seen places that are making those healthier choices on their menus also. I will buy from that healthier menu, and I think it's a great thing because, like many in this House, we're always busy and we're always on the go. I like the Pita Express because I can make a good, healthy choice, and I like the fact that I know what that healthy choice is.

Would I like to see sodium added to that? Absolutely. I think that's an absolutely critical part of this bill that's missing.

While I have the opportunity, once again, I just want to give a shout-out to the member from Nickel Belt for the amazing work that she has done for so many years, bringing all of these important bills to the floor. It just shows that if you stay at it, if you work hard, things will actually one day get done. The Liberals will decide one day to pick it up and know that it's the right thing to do for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise before the House to speak about the importance of Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Education, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the member from Davenport.

This bill, if passed, would be a critical step to strengthen our Smoke-Free Ontario Act and curb the use of harmful tobacco products by all Ontarians. The detrimental effects of tobacco are well-documented. We

know that tobacco is an extremely addictive substance that has been shown to cause a variety of diseases, like mouth disease, lung cancer, heart disease and emphysema.

Given the serious and harmful effects of tobacco, I'm pleased to see our government taking action to reduce youth exposure to tobacco products. The proposed act is looking to ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthols. Approximately 18,500 young Ontarians in grades 9 to 12 use menthol tobacco products. According to a survey of Canadian youth, one in four high school students reported smoking a menthol cigarette in the past 30 days.

We are deeply concerned by this trend because research has shown that flavoured tobacco products are a gateway to tobacco use and addiction for our youth. This is largely because menthol's cooling effect can reduce the harsh taste of tobacco, making it more tolerable for new smokers and making youth more likely to become habitual smokers. This is why our government is proposing to include menthol in its ban on the sale of flavoured tobacco.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen our Smoke-Free Ontario Act by increasing penalties for selling tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada, and strengthening enforcement to test for tobacco use in indoor public places.

While we move forward, we are giving retailers the time to plan. Should this bill pass, tobacco retailers and distributors will have until January 1, 2016, to comply with the ban on flavoured tobacco.

Over the last several years, our government has taken several steps to toughen the tobacco laws, ban smoking in public places and encourage more Ontarians to quit altogether. I would say this is for the overall enjoyment of various environments by everyone. We know that many smokers start smoking when they are young, so the best way to curb tobacco is to prevent people from starting in the first place.

Lately, we are seeing the use of e-cigarettes growing in Ontario, and there are concerns about the possible health effects of these e-cigarette uses. At this time, there is limited research on the effectiveness of e-cigarettes to help people quit smoking. This act will help regulate these products. The act would take important steps, such as a ban on the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19 and banning the display and promotion of e-cigarettes in places where e-cigarettes and tobacco products are sold. It would also prohibit the use of e-cigarettes in certain places where smoking of tobacco is prohibited, such as enclosed workplaces and enclosed public areas.

Speaker, we know that the foundations of a healthy lifestyle are built in childhood. The healthier our kids are, the less likely they are to develop a chronic disease later in life. Indeed, these are preventive strategies we're talking about. In order for our parents and children to make healthy choices, they need to be informed about the food that they are eating. This legislation will make it easier for families to make informed, healthy food choices.

I actually agree with the member opposite when she talked about coming from a family where you eat what's on your plate. That was certainly the rule in my household as laid down by my parents. It actually forced you to be very thoughtful about what you were putting on your plate. Our government is proposing menu labelling legislation. If the legislation passes, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to legislate menu labelling, which will help people make informed choices when eating out or purchasing takeout meals.

This legislation was developed following consultations with the food industry, the health sector, and parents, and, if passed, would require calories for food and beverages, including alcohol, to be posted on menus and menu boards in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario. It would require food service operators to post a contextual statement that would help to educate patrons about their daily caloric requirements, and it would authorize public health inspectors to enforce menu labelling requirements. This bill will ensure that Ontarians have the information to make informed choices for their health. I encourage the members from all sides of the House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults and that if we can work with our kids to be healthy when they are young, they are less likely to have chronic diseases and health problems when they grow up. That's obviously better for the individual child. It is, quite frankly, better for society, because then we have less demands on our health care system.

Looking at that, our government set up the Healthy Kids Panel, and the Healthy Kids Panel was charged with making some recommendations in areas that would help our kids to be more healthy. They came up with three different areas of focus.

The first was the healthy start, and by this we're looking at strategies to support healthy pregnancy and the early years to build the foundation for a healthy childhood and beyond.

They talked about healthy, active communities and making sure our children are more physically active, and certainly my ministry, at education, has a role to play in that. We're looking at how our kids can be more active not just in school but in areas associated with school.

The third area was the area that this act addresses, in part: the healthy food area. We need to make sure that our kids and their families—because often it's the family choosing the food—are making healthy choices around food. It's interesting. When we look at menu labelling and the food that you buy commercially in restaurants, we have this increasing trend of Canadians eating out, particularly at chain restaurants, when we're talking about young kids, and buying more prepared foods from grocery and convenience stores.

1730

What a survey found was that 60% of Canadians eat out once or more a week and that Ontarians lead among other jurisdictions in eating out. So we eat out more than other Canadians. In fact, 20% of us buy our lunches three or more times a week; that is to say, instead of preparing our own lunch, we buy it from somebody else.

That's where this legislation comes in: the menu labelling. What the legislation will require is that, in restaurants, the menus will have to be posted—or on the menu card you get if you are being served at your seat—and that they will actually have to have calorie counts.

This applies to chains that have 20 or more outlets, because we know if it's a mom-and-pop restaurant and they change the menu constantly, and they have no way of counting the calories in tonight's menu, we know that that would be an unreasonable demand on small restaurants. But when we get to big chains, we know that the food preparation is very much controlled by the chain—it's repeated; it doesn't matter whether you go to this outlet or that outlet, you're getting the same thing—so they can provide the calorie count.

We consulted with restaurants, food services and the retail sector, and have legislation here that we believe is quite workable for the restaurant sector. It was interesting; earlier this afternoon the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex was talking about doughnuts and muffins at a chain. We found out some information that would be very useful to my husband, which is that a maple dip doughnut has less calories and less fat than a muffin. Now, it happens that he really likes maple dip doughnuts and isn't such a big fan of muffins, so he, for one, will be very pleased to hear this information.

But the other thing that the legislation will require, beyond the actual labelling of the calories and the fat in the individual item, is actually some information that puts it in context—how many calories do you need a day, how much fat do you need a day—so that you can get a sense of, “If I eat this thing, it's just a little bit of my daily requirements,” or, “My goodness, if I eat this, it's all the fat I need today and tomorrow.” People, if they're given the opportunity to know what they're eating, make better choices, and this legislation will help them do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the previous speakers for their comments on Bill 45, and begin by thanking our minister for bringing this legislation forward and the previous minister, I know, who did a great deal of work on this as well in terms of getting it into the Legislature.

I was just saying to my colleagues who are still sitting with us here this afternoon that this is good policy. This is a good piece—there has been a tremendous amount of work that has gone into bringing this forward. I think that as a group, we can be very proud of the work that we're doing. It's not the kind of legislation, I don't think, that gets too much publicity, and does not last long in the public domain—and that's unfortunate, because there is much in here that is very good and very great.

I want to begin by giving a bit of a shout-out to my home community of Thunder Bay. Contained within Bill 45 here, the Making Healthier Choices Act, are pieces of legislation that deal with smoking, work that we've done previously and work that we will continue to do on a go-forward basis.

I was a member of city council from 1997 to 2003 in Thunder Bay. I'm not sure if we were the first community in the province, but we were one of the first, at that time, that brought forward our own local bylaw to deal with smoking and prohibitions around smoking. How fast time goes by; you think back to 1997 and 2003. As a community, the city of Thunder Bay has a lot to be proud of. We were very progressive, when you think about it, because it has been subsequent to that that the province has come on board. Again, I'm not sure if other municipalities had done it already or not, but if we weren't the first, in the city of Thunder Bay, to deal with this issue, we were one of the first.

We all know full well what smoking means and how damaging it is to us. We've made great progress. The rates, I think, are in the high teens to the low 20s in terms of the population that continues to smoke. I don't think it's ever been that low.

The challenge, of course, is that there is always a new generation coming forward and the industry is always looking for new ways to entice and entice that new generation to become smokers. So the work, when it comes to smoking, never ends.

I remember my grandfather on my mother's side very well. He was a wonderful man, a great man. He loved kids. He loved spending time with us, his grandchildren. We lost him to lung cancer in 1972, I believe it was, at a ridiculously young age. But he was a long-term smoker, and that was directly the result of his habit. So anything that we can do to continue to work with people—I will say that I probably didn't have a fully evolved attitude on smoking when I was younger. I smoked when I was 15 years old; I quit when I was about 21 or 22. I used to think that you just needed to suck it up and do it, and that if you couldn't quit smoking then it was you who couldn't do it. I really didn't buy in enough to the addiction part of it, I would say.

I remember having a discussion with a colleague of mine one time when I was working in Thunder Bay, and I said, "Look, just do it. You can do it," and the person was very offended because it was that person's father that we were talking about. He had been a 50+ or 60-year smoker. I said, "He can do it." But I wasn't really open enough to the idea that people really were strongly addicted to it and that they did need help.

We have done some things that I think make it easier for them to quit. I've used up enough of my time on smoking, Speaker.

I do want to talk just a little bit, before I turn it over to my colleague, about the childhood obesity part. There are measures, I know, that are contained in here and the Healthy Kids Panel.

We all grew up—at least my generation; I'm closing in on 60 years old already—a certain way. Your parents

kicked you outside at 8 o'clock and they called you in at 6 o'clock. Maybe you got dinner and maybe you didn't. Maybe you didn't want dinner. You were outside. You were playing. We grew up in a very different way.

I try not to be critical, and I don't think I am, of this generation or the subsequent generations of kids who tend to be indoors more and playing with gadgets that we didn't have when we grew up. I try to remind myself that if we had grown up with those toys, maybe we would have done exactly the same things that they're doing now.

We've got an epidemic on our hands when it comes to childhood obesity. We know that when you have a problem when you're young, you tend to carry that forward with you into your adult years. Anything that we can do to bring a focus back to those issues, to educate people or provide them with tools that are going to make it easier for them to make appropriate choices, I think, serves us all very well. We need to do that.

I link that little story back to the piece on menu labelling that we're doing. I know that the previous speaker, the Minister of Education, talked about how we're only doing this where you have 20 or more locations. We're sensitive to the fact that the smaller operators might have some challenges around us doing that, but it's a good piece. It's in the long-term interest of so many people. I think that those who maybe feel a bit aggrieved by this now will, five, 10, 15 years from now, start to see the benefit.

I grew up in a small family corner store, and I could tell you stories about how easy it was for me to be tempted, at 11 o'clock at night when my parents had gone to bed, to sneak into the cooler to grab a couple of sticks of pepperoni before I went to bed, but I don't have enough time. I've got to turn it over to my colleague. I'll save that story for another time.

Thank you, Speaker. It's great legislation, and it's well-timed and necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise here this afternoon to speak on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I want to thank the previous speakers before me.

Earlier today in the House I had the opportunity to talk about a fantastic organization in my riding of Davenport, FoodShare, which, for over 30 years, has had its doors open to increase access to healthy food and food education in our province.

I recently attended their eighth annual Great Big Crunch. That afternoon we had numerous students joining us at that particular event, and the students not only enjoyed some delicious Ontario produce, but also participated in many hands-on food literacy activities and learned the importance of making healthy eating choices.

It is truly very important for every one of us to make healthy eating choices in order to lead better and more fulfilling lives. The Minister of Health is committed to keeping Ontarians healthy, and that's why we are putting

this bill forward. We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults, and a healthy start is better for our kids and it's better for our health care system.

I know that in my own home with my two young boys I try the best that I can to make those home-made meals whenever I can get home in time to make them. If not, then I know that my mother is at home making them for my children and they're being raised the way I was: with the food grown in the garden.

1740

Interestingly enough, my eldest, who is 10, actually does not like junk food and refuses to attend various fast-food restaurants—some of them have been referenced here. He refuses because he likes to eat healthy and drinks waters and loves his soup and his vegetables.

It's raising these kids healthy that will lead to there being less likelihood of them developing chronic disease later in life. That's why the Ontario government constructed the Healthy Kids Panel. They provided us with invaluable advice, and we are moving forward on many of the panel's recommendations, including around healthy eating choices for our kids.

In order for us, as parents, and the children to make healthy food choices, we need to be informed about the food that we are eating. Our government is committed to this healthy way of life and has reintroduced legislation which will make it easier for families to make informed and healthy food choices and give them the right information at the right place at the right time.

Oftentimes, when I go into my local grocery store, I see lots of people picking up their cans and their boxed foods and whatever it is to read the labels. It's important now that we are provided with this opportunity, as consumers, when we do go out to have a family meal, to have that on the menus in the restaurants.

That's why we have proposed this to take place. It would require restaurants or any type of convenience store, grocery store or fast-food service premise that has 20 or more locations, as has already been said here, to post all the calories on their menus and on their menu boards. We did consult with the restaurant and food service and retail sectors on this to help us design and implement this menu labelling legislation, which will help parents keep their children healthy.

Mr. Speaker, it has given me great pleasure to speak on this. I know I am running out of time. I just hope that there continues to be support for this bill moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 45, which I support. I think it's a very worthy bill.

I will speak to the part of labelling food with the interest of trying to have our children eat better so they can grow up to be adults with better eating habits and therefore healthier people.

The heart and stroke people were in to see me today, as they have been in to see many people. They have some

excellent literature. I'm going to quote from some of their documents right here.

They talk about restricting marketing to kids of some of these larger fast-food chains so they get in their minds that that's what they want to eat. When they talk to mommy and daddy, of course, they say, "That's where I have to go to get my little toy with my food," as I heard the Minister of Labour speak about earlier. I've been there, done that with my kids, and I have a grandson probably going down the same road.

The level of marketing or advertising on television and even on computers and iPhones is very intense, very effective. They tell us at the Heart and Stroke Foundation that the average child spends seven hours and 48 minutes a day on a screen, whether it's a computer, an iPhone or a television, and up to six times per hour they would see an advertisement encouraging them to eat these fast foods that often are not the healthiest food for them.

According to the heart and stroke people, since 1978, obesity in Canadian children has tripled, and 31% of Canadian children are overweight or obese. The most effective way to reduce that, or that demand in the minds of children to want that kind of food, is to restrict the advertising, as they have done in Quebec, where they have outlawed or banned through legislation these kinds of advertisements to children. They did that in 1980, and they dropped fast-food consumption by 13%, which leads to healthier children. So that is a goal that I think we should all be aiming for in the long run, which is beyond this bill and, I would say, a noble goal to shoot for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it was good to listen to the government debating on this bill, and obviously they are in support of it.

One member had referenced—some of us are younger; some of us are a more mature generation—about the food on your plate. I never bought into that when my parents said, "You have to eat all the food on your plate." What I did is, I took less, and I went back for more. When I raised my kids, I always put less on their plates, and my parents would say, "They're going to starve. You've got to give them more food." I said, "Don't worry. If they're hungry, they'll go back for more." I tried to instill good eating habits about portions and what you eat right from a young age.

For myself, I come from a Portuguese culture, and food is celebrated all the time. At every event there are exorbitant amounts of food and desserts, and it's an indulgence, sometimes, when people get together with food.

It's really important to do that in your own life as well as the calorie count that we're talking about. It's really important to know what's in your food, and how many calories there are. We talked about the sodium piece that's lacking in this bill. Those things are part of the nutritional value in food.

All of us are on a very busy schedule. When I'm enjoying a meal, I personally like to get as much nutritional

value out of that meal as I can. Speaker, you know that. You and I have dined out, and you're well aware of my healthy appetite.

It's good to see that there's going to be calorie counts in this bill. It's fair to say that if you have a franchise of 20 or more restaurants, you should be labelling your menus and showing the calorie count. I think that's good. Also, watching our children, trying to get them on board and educating them at home as well as when they go out to eat is very important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise in the House in support of Bill 45.

I would like to segue on what the member from London—Fanshawe was saying. I grew up in a different family, where food was really important. One of the concerns was always, "Have you eaten enough?" That's what you hear from your parents. That's what you hear from your grandparents. I'm of an Italian background, so "Have you eaten enough?" is also what I say to my kids.

But at the same time, it is important to avoid child obesity, and this bill is really about the next generation and about making sure that we have healthy kids who will turn into healthy adults, and that will lead to healthy families and healthy communities. We all have to learn to make healthy choices in what we eat and also everything that we take into our bodies. This is one of the reasons why I support the menu labelling that this bill proposes.

This bill also proposes more restrictions on smoking and on e-cigarettes. I grew up in the 1970s, and that was a different era. My teachers and my professors smoked. My doctor smoked. We had ads advertising cigarettes. It was a different time. We didn't know all the harmful effects of smoking as we know them today. It would be irresponsible of us not to think of the future generation and spare them, perhaps, from what happened to many of our generation who did become addicted by smoking and, like the member from Hamilton Mountain, had to go through a great effort in order to quit. I hope to get there someday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Norm Miller: All this talk about food is making me hungry.

I did want to comment on the speech from the Associate Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the member from Davenport on Bill 45.

I met earlier today with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. They were lobbying to ban advertising to kids 13 or under and pointing out that the sedentary lifestyle, now that there's so much face time in front of various devices—they said that young people are sedentary for eight hours a day.

But I do think it's all about balance. A book I'm reading right now is *The Big Fat Surprise*. I was pleased to learn so far, about a third of the way through the book, that saturated fat is not necessarily bad for you—because I like things that have saturated fat in them.

But it is about balance for sure. I'm learning from the book that basically, as we've gone to no fat in everything from 1960 on, we've gone to things like complex carbohydrates and sugar and more processed foods, which may actually be worse. So I think it is certainly about balance. Obviously, a balanced diet, including some saturated fat—and also, for all of us, getting a lot more exercise can go a long way as well.

1750

Also, there's no question that we should be trying to stop smoking. I met recently with the convenience store operators, and they question the wisdom of banning menthol cigarettes and worry about the contraband market, because that is an area that hasn't been addressed. Almost 50% of the cigarettes and tobacco products sold in the province are contraband. That's certainly something that I know the government has talked about addressing but needs to do a better job on. Quebec has had a little bit more success; they've reduced contraband by 15%—I see I'm out of time. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Finance has two minutes.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I think we've had a very healthy debate this afternoon. I want to thank all the members for their comments. I want to thank the Minister of Education, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member from Davenport, the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, the member from London—Fanshawe, the member from York South—Weston and the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

I think everyone has talked about the importance and the significance of Bill 45 and the impact that it will have on families and on children. One of the aspects I really liked was what the member was saying about advertising and reminding people about what to eat. I know that one of the tips that I heard for parents is, simply put out the good choices; if you have them visible, children and family members will actually take the time to have that apple or carrot stick versus a sugary or salty snack.

I think my colleague from Thunder Bay certainly has reminded me of my own riding of Scarborough—Guildwood and the wonderful food culture in the community. It's a place that has people from many, many different backgrounds and diverse communities who have set up businesses. We've actually just been recognized by the *Toronto Star* as one of the best places for food. So I encourage you all to explore the food culture in Scarborough and to try some of the great diverse cuisines that are there. I think that with great, smart legislation like Bill 45, we're going to have even better choices for our families moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's my privilege to rise today and speak to Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

First of all, I'd like to say that I'm supporting this legislation because I think there's a real need for it. But I

think we could certainly do much better. I'm looking forward to amendments that might do that. Plus we're hoping the government will go even further.

As I say, I think it could be much better, especially when you're looking at getting real results. We know that the regulations that we're seeing lately are not having any real impact and that the changes that were supposed to lower the current levels of obesity just aren't working—we're seeing obesity rates going through the roof—and youth smoking levels are remaining stubbornly high. We know that the one bright light that's actually helping people quit, e-cigarettes, is being further regulated.

I'll break Bill 45 down into the three components. The first one enacts healthy menu choices. The high obesity rates in today's society in Canada is alarming, and it's a record that we share with most of the industrial world. I struggle with my weight, and it makes me appreciate the people who struggle with their weight—as well as trying to stop smoking. It's tough for most of us. The battle requires a change in lifestyle.

Since the new year, I've struggled through diets, my favourite being the fat-burning soup, and have been down as much as 15 pounds but quickly back up. It's an up-and-down fight, and it's not something that's easy, especially when you look at the course that we're on here. You're constantly on the road, and the job requires that you're always attending a fundraiser. It's not unusual on a Saturday morning to attend a couple of breakfasts—the odd time, three—and a couple of lunches, and of course there's usually a Friday- or Saturday-night large-dinner fundraiser that you're expected to be at. It always is a struggle. Then you throw in a week when you're trying to get away, and you're back up to where you started, most times.

When I was growing up on a small mixed dairy farm in the 1960s, the diet we had was pretty simple, especially when you figure in the lack of meat on Fridays. We had lots of bread, lots of beef, milk, potatoes and macaroni, but we all seemed to be able to eat endlessly and never put on weight. We got home from school and we could go through more than a loaf of bread—I had three brothers about the same age and a couple of sisters. Then you go out and do the chores, and come back for supper and you'd eat again. Young farm boys: We're big eaters.

In those days, my dad had to deal with the local baker in Dalhousie Mills. For two dollars, you'd get 30 loaves of bread a week, and we usually ran out before the week was over. Obviously those were the days of lower energy rates than this Liberal government's, which is a good thing, because there wasn't a lot of money around. I remember seeing a milk cheque in the spring of the year—somewhere around \$7 a week—so my mom had to be creative, but living on the farm we always had lots of food to eat. I think my mom's favourite saying was, "It's not a restaurant," so if you didn't like what they had or if you were late, there was always lots of peanut butter in the cupboard.

Back to today's obesity. I believe the calorie-counter idea is an excellent one, and one that we must work on,

but it must be followed up with education: what are the recommended calorie intake rates and what impact does exercise have on it—not to mention the increased exercise in our schools that we aren't seeing. There's no mention of educating our children or managing their diet and exercise. Really, it has to become a habit. I think that's what we've got to see. But children have to know just why they're making sacrifices and what's really going to be there. People must be educated on the basis of how exercise and food impact their weight and general health, and all the benefits that go along with that. If you just make it harder, our children will use their resources—and they're resourceful—just to beat the system.

I don't agree with the practice today of just banning certain supposed "bad foods" from our schools, because without the proper lessons, the students just walk down the street to the local restaurant and pig out on the foods that we're trying to make it very difficult for them to get. At our local high school, if there's a school trip, there are not enough children for the cafeteria to operate and they close it down. Not only are we encouraging the children to go down the street to get the food they want, but the children who will eat in the cafeteria have no place to eat. Really, there's a practice that's not working, because we have to make it practical and we have to look at the results. With people on low incomes spending money on the wrong foods, education is really the key. People have to be selective, and they have to be able to do so when they're struggling.

It's the same thing in the bigger schools in Cornwall. It's a rural area, but when you look at the local restaurants, they're lined up at noontime. The only positive thing is that the kids are walking a couple of blocks down the street to the restaurant. Fortunately, sometimes they'll cross the street. It's easy to see that it's not working. Calories are an important first step, but we must educate our children on the right foods, and we must make it a habit and work with them to make the right choice.

Poverty also impacts people's choices. Good and healthy foods are expensive, and even more so as this government has driven up costs over the last 12 years. There's less money, with hydro bills, property taxes etc., to buy food. More and more people are taking to community soup kitchens, and this is the wrong direction. The percentage of people on minimum wage is up dramatically in this province. We need good-paying jobs and competitive policies that will attract the good, high-paying jobs that we've seen disappear over the last number of years.

Next I'll talk about cigarettes. It's clear that today's methods, again, aren't working. As with everywhere in Ontario, contraband cigarettes are heavily in eastern Ontario.

I guess we'll finish off there for the day. Thank you for the time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Oxford has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today on the HSC tenants' insurance program by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member from Oxford.

1800

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Earlier today, I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about the fact that tenants in social housing are being overcharged for tenant insurance because of a kickback to the Housing Services Corp. The minister didn't even address the tenant insurance program in his answer.

I want to be clear why I was dissatisfied with the minister's answer: not just because he didn't know about the kickback, but because he didn't even say he would look into it. He seemed more worried about his government's reputation than whether someone was taking advantage of tenants in social housing.

I hope the minister has changed his approach, that he used the last six hours to not only look at this kickback but to contact HSC and solve it. I hope he's going to tell us that his government has taken action instead of standing by and allowing this organization to take advantage of tenants in social housing.

Housing Services Corp. has been pushing housing providers to make tenant insurance mandatory, and most tenants are only being told about HSC's tenant insurance. The insurance company, the broker, and the general managing agency who are doing the work are getting paid, but tenants are also paying 5% more to go into HSC's pocket. That means that tenants who are struggling to make ends meet are paying 5% more for insurance than they should—5% of every premium paid by social housing tenants. Think about how much that would add up to, and it's going to Housing Services Corp., a company that isn't actually insuring the tenants, isn't the broker, and doesn't even operate the website where they buy the insurance.

Most people have never even heard of Housing Services Corp. It was founded in 2002 with two staff and a budget of about a million dollars. The goal was to save social housing providers money by negotiating bulk purchases of natural gas and insurance. As the minister acknowledged earlier this week, it was an idea that was good. However, over the last few years, there have been numerous problems at HSC—questionable deals, European trips and fancy meals.

Until 2006, the budget for staff salaries was a little over a million dollars, but then the staffing budget spiralled to \$7.5 million in six years and no one in the government seemed to notice: \$7.5 million that was intended for social housing. That's just one example of their questionable spending.

Earlier this week, I rose and asked the Premier about HS 497 Ltd., a company that Housing Services Corp. invested in according to their own 2010 financial statements. I hope the minister will be addressing this during his remarks as well.

The corporate address of HS 497 Ltd. turns out to be a lawyer's office in Manchester, England. It appears that the company never actually became active or operated, but they did get over \$30,000 of Ontario's affordable housing money. I want to make it clear to the minister: Your review only covers the last two years. It won't look into the money that went to HS 497. It won't look into the million dollars that went to Innoserv Solar. The only way to have those problems investigated properly is to call in the auditor.

Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that taxpayer dollars are being wasted, but this is impacting the people who need social housing. There are 165,000 families waiting for affordable housing. That's 40,000 more than when this government was elected. Municipalities are reporting that buying through Housing Services Corp. is costing them money that could be used to provide homes for those families.

Peel region reported they are spending an extra \$182,000 in one year because they are forced to purchase natural gas from HSC. That would have provided housing for 30 families.

Hamilton reported spending an extra \$1.1 million on natural gas because of HSC. That's housing for 140 families.

Oxford county estimates that HSC costs them about \$100,000 every year. They say that's housing for 25 families.

Minister, we are hearing from municipalities large and small that Housing Services Corp. isn't saving them money; it's costing them money.

I hope the minister has used the last six hours to look into the problems at HSC. I hope he will be reporting to us that he has contacted them and asked them to lower the price of tenant insurance instead of taking kickbacks. I hope he will agree to call in the auditor so we can sort out those problems and make sure that affordable housing money goes where it's intended: to help vulnerable people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has five minutes.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Speaker, the Housing Services Corp. is an independent, non-profit corporation originally established under the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, and continued under the Housing Services Act, 2011. I think the member opposite is familiar with the Social Housing Reform Act, as he was a member of the PC government at the time and voted in favour of the legislation.

The Housing Services Corp. is mandated to provide certain vital and valued services centrally, and with a goal to reduce costs and improve efficiencies to the housing providers accessing them. I've said it before and I'll say it again: The pooling of resources to benefit housing providers across Ontario was the one thing the PCs got right, when they created the Housing Services Corp.

Here's a couple of quotes, and I quote directly. From the general manager of the Peel Housing Corp.: "I am writing to express my full endorsement for" HSC. "HSC works for us housing providers by leveraging our combined buying power in the private market, making sure we get the best deals.... HSC ensures that both small and large affordable housing providers in Ontario continue to be viable."

But more important than that, as a government that is committed to openness and transparency, we believe that accountable, fiscally responsible policies are critical. That is why, in 2011, under the Housing Services Act, our government reformed the legislation that governs HSC. We fixed gaps in accountability and transparency that the member and former government forgot to legislate in 2000. As a result of our reforms, HSC is required to provide an annual report to me, as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, including audited financial statements, within 180 days of the end of the fiscal year.

HSC efficiently serves central functions such as bulk purchasing of natural gas and insurance, and in so doing benefits clients and saves them money.

With respect to insurance, HSC ensures that every provider, no matter its size and risk profile, is able to access insurance. This insurance pertains to the provider, not tenants. HSC's insurance program assures providers of continuity of coverage, even in the event of catastrophic loss by the provider; for example, as a result of fire or flood. In short, the needs of the many are served over the needs of the few or the one, and that benefits all municipal housing program providers.

Here's another quote, from the CEO of Nipissing District Housing Corp.: "As a manager of a small to

medium-sized social housing provider, the Housing Services Corp. has provided us with services that we have neither the finances nor the expertise to acquire on our own; services such as natural gas bulk purchasing ... for price and budget stability...."

While I recognize that the board operates independently, HSC was created by provincial legislation, and the people of Ontario have a right to be confident that public dollars are being spent wisely. So back in the fall, when I became aware of some of the questionable reimbursement and compensation practices, I wrote to the board chair, reaffirming the government's expectation—long before it was raised by the member opposite, by the way—that the corporation use good judgment and ensure every dollar is spent wisely and efficiently.

In response to my letter, the HSC board revised its remuneration and expense policies in line with the Management Board of Cabinet's directives. As part of the HSC's commitment to be more open, transparent and accountable, the corporation asked the ministry to help facilitate an independent, third-party review of itself and its subsidiaries. I expect that review will be finished later this spring.

The member has had much to say about the Housing Services Corp. He knows about the value that they bring, and I encourage the member opposite to be accurate when he speaks about HSC. For example, on several occasions, the member has made statements implying HSC is wasting public funds that would otherwise go towards affordable housing. This is simply not true. There are no public funds here. This is an independent, self-financed, non-profit corporation.

My ministry is going to facilitate the independent review. When we have the results, I want to be very clear: If that necessitates further actions, I will certainly take them. Until that happens, I will not be stampeded by wild accusations and unfounded assumptions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
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Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
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Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**



**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 26 March 2015

Jeudi 26 mars 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm pleased to bring forward second reading of Bill 66, the new proposed Great Lakes Protection Act. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga—Brampton South, and I want to start by thanking her for her leadership and her hard work on this file. Mr. Speaker, you may know that the member is also a teacher and an educator—quite well respected in that profession—and a big part of this piece of legislation is education and engagement. So we have benefited greatly by her expertise in that area and by her particular concern for young people, because this is really a legacy project for our children.

This has been a work of some considerable effort. It is a rather unique piece of legislation, because this is not a piece of legislation focused just on enabling the government of Ontario, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to protect the Great Lakes and their watershed. It is actually a piece of legislation that will enable a whole array of civil society and community organizations.

This is something that municipal governments on the Great Lakes have been wanting for a long time. It enables their efforts to develop tourism and protect water quality. It works with both our source water protection committees and our conservation authorities, which play critical roles in protecting the watershed and our source water supply. We are very aware of that, after events like Gogama. Whether it's tanker cars that are leaking or catching on fire, whether it's the problems we saw with blue-green algae in Lake Erie last summer that actually

shut down the water system in the city of Toledo, Ohio, for several days—even boiling water does not get that out—we know that for municipal governments and for municipal utilities, and for our source water protection groups and our conservation authorities, this is a critically important issue.

It's also important to farmers. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Education, and the members for Newmarket—Aurora and Durham and I were with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, listening, just moments ago, enjoying a great breakfast with them and getting back in touch with a very important community of folks and a very important part of our economy, Mr. Speaker.

The OFA raised four issues with us. I'm happy to say two of them were environmental issues, but one of the issues that they raised was the Great Lakes Protection Act. Mr. McCabe, the president of the OFA, talked quite eloquently about the incredible responsibilities that farmers feel towards protecting the lake, and the decisions and complexity that adds to farm managers to both be good stewards of their land, to provide a secure, nutritious, healthful supply of food to all of us—which we often, sadly, take for granted these days, many of us who are city folk—and also the importance of exports. But he spent a long time talking about the importance of our water, our water supply, the quality of lake water, how interdependent farmers are for clean drinking water, why they need clean water and their role in protecting it. So this will bring our farmers, our farm communities, and agricultural and producer organizations into the discussion about it.

One of the things we're also very proud of is that this was worked on very well with First Nations communities. We are in the traditional lands of many First Nations. The council of Ontario chiefs and others have recently put out a series of papers on the role of First Nations and water stewardship. We worked very closely with them to ensure that, in our bilateral agreements with the federal government around the Great Lakes and in this legislation, we well recognize the millennia of great leadership and stewardship by First Nations and we build that role of traditional knowledge about our lakes—folks who have been observing our lakes and using our lakes and protecting our lakes for generations, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take a moment—because I know my parliamentary assistant is going to talk a lot about what's in the act, I'm not going to go into that at great length. This is really her role, and the member will be stewarding this, thankfully, through the committee process. And we look

forward to her engagement with her colleagues in the House as this goes through committee. I'm going to ask all members to please work very closely with the member from Brampton-Springdale-Mississauga South in that effort. We have—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Did I screw it up? No it's not okay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What? What was that?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Pardon me? I think I got the member's constituency wrong.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Mississauga—Brampton South.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mississauga—Brampton South. My apologies.

Hon. Liz Sandals: You said "Springdale" where you should have said "South." You got two out of three.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I got two out of three, says the Minister of Education. I think two out of three, if I remember, is a C grade.

Hon. Michael Chan: Passing grade: 66%. You're still okay.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That was usually a week's grounding if I came home with Cs on my report card.

Hon. Michael Chan: B minus; how about that?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: B minus. The member from Markham has just given me a lift.

So what are some of the challenges that we're trying to deal with? We're trying to deal with invasive species. That includes everything from zebra mussels, which have dramatically changed the character of the lake. The turbidity that was in our waters, the cloudiness, is gone, which, if you're a diver like me, might be an exciting thing, but it's not a great thing for the lake and it has changed the character of the waters. Asian carp are at the gate of our lakes, and that's a critical, critical issue. We have grasses growing on our beaches that are destroying the biodiversity and natural habitats of our beaches, which are critical to our pollinators, and diminishing the enjoyment that Ontarians have of the Great Lakes waterfront. I know that my critic, the member for Huron—Bruce—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You got that right.

0910

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I got that one right.

The member for Huron—Bruce has raised the issue about the invasive species that are affecting the grasses and that, and I credit her for it. This is one of those non-partisan issues that I think—I hope—we can work on, because invasive species, whether they're fauna or flora, are very, very challenging for us. We, as Ontarians, share—hopefully, we can be Ontarians before we're partisans more often than not. This is something that I think all members of this House would like to see as a legacy, and this is a good vehicle, after it's passed, for MPPs, local mayors, community leaders and businesses. This is important to our outfitters, to tourism, to fishing guides, to hunting, to our anglers. This is important to a whole bunch of urban, rural and suburban folk who have

the great privilege of living on the most beautiful and largest freshwater supply in the world.

We're also affected by carbon dioxide emissions. We often talk about them in terms of climate change, but there is a less talked about but, I think many people would say, equally challenging problem with the high level of carbon dioxide emissions that this government—we hope with the co-operation of the parties opposite—is trying to bring down. We're very proud, as a government, that we are 6% under our 1990 greenhouse gas emission levels. We just met, and hopefully will exceed, our 2014 targets and are now working very hard with new initiatives to get to our 2015 targets.

One of the reasons that we're bringing carbon dioxide down, and why that links to the Great Lakes Protection Act, and why this act is so important in that family of legislation—our Invasive Species Act, the Great Lakes Protection Act and the work we've done on climate change and green energy—is because carbon dioxide is being absorbed into our lakes and oceans, and it's causing acidification.

There's something that we don't see but will certainly notice when they're gone—they're little creatures called daphnia. They're a phytoplankton. You don't often think of creatures that small as crustaceans—as having shells—but they do. Daphnia are the very foundation—if you're an angler or a fisher or an outfitter, you'll know a lot about these things, because these creatures are the very basis of the food chain for all of our fish populations in all of our Great Lakes. We know that we have a crisis there—a rather invisible one unless you have a microscope—because these little crustaceans can no longer form their shells. We're already at a point where the level of acidification in the Great Lakes is interfering with—is reducing—the ability of the very base of the food supply for all the higher-order species. They're also being impacted by microscopic invasive species of different types that do not provide the nutrition or the stable food supply.

This act requires us to better measure and record water conditions. I'll be working very closely with our parliamentary assistants and with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, our sister ministry which is responsible for the creatures in the lake. I am responsible for water, soil and air. Bad weather: You can blame that on me, I guess.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It's all your fault.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's all my fault, says the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is close to godliness and has a ministry above all of this clutter and clatter.

But for those of us who toil in these more base ministries, Mr. Speaker, we have to deal with these things. The Minister of Natural Resources is working very closely with us, and we will soon have a much clearer picture of the conditions of these micro-organisms, and we will be able to work much more effectively at intervening in the acidification of our lakes.

Then we have climate change—we talked a little bit about blue-green algae and about the horrible experiences

we've had in Burlington. Burlington, we all know, is a pretty modern suburban community, right next door to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He would be one of the first people, as would Minister Duguid, the Minister of Infrastructure, who would tell you that we have some problems with our stormwater sewer system. We listened to engineers, and for the last 200 years, we have built our stormwater sewer systems to hundred-year flood events. Well, we've had two hundred-year flood events in Burlington in the last two years. They're now annual events. They've done everything from overwhelming our stormwater system to causing mass flooding in people's basements, causing huge costs to working Ontario families who live in those communities. We've now lost our operating rooms twice at the Burlington hospital, a brand new hospital. That's not the kind of place that people want to see their tax dollars going: replacing operating rooms, having to pay exorbitant insurance rates and risking not being able to be insured.

We know that part of what we'll do with Great Lakes protection is to start working with municipalities; we'll be working with my colleague and dear friend Ted McMeekin, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and my friend Brad Duguid, the Minister of Infrastructure, and members opposite who represent those communities, as well. This has to be a Team Ontario approach to our lakes, because no one ministry and none of us on our own can solve these problems.

We need to figure out ways to start dealing with infrastructure that is climate-change-resilient, that's flood-resilient. We need to look at the issues of stormwater, whether it's the water running off our streets that is causing nutrients and pollution in our lake or whether it's these very abrupt rain events that are now happening to farmers, whose farm practices for 100 or 200 years have been more than sufficient to keep those nutrients out of our lakes, where the change in rain patterns is now meaning even previously very, very viable farm practices that kept nutrients out of lakes are no longer working; we need to work with our farm community and municipalities, whether it's an urban system or a rural system, to keep those nutrients out.

Most of Canada's industry, I think about 70% of our industrial production, is along the Great Lakes right now, Mr. Speaker, so working with the industrial producers, making sure that they have economically viable businesses—but that they're ones that live in harmony with our lakes and contribute to the net health.

We're also losing a lot of our farmland in this area. We have all kinds of compounding problems that make lake management so difficult.

We have more substances out there than we ever had before going into our lakes—pharmaceuticals. I remember when I was chairing the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, a woman well known to our friends in the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, a former federal member, Pauline Browes, who many of you will remember was a federal MP from Scarborough, a dear friend of mine—a little politically mis-

guided, but still a dear friend. I say that only humorously. Pauline and I worked very closely together in Ottawa on trying to keep pharmaceuticals out of our lakes and out of our toilets; the kinds of things that we do with hamsters, goldfish, and pharmaceuticals are not good things to do. Please don't flush them down the toilet, because we now have levels of pharmaceuticals that were never intended and are having some very severe consequences on fish populations and amphibians and on the health of many species which we eat. We don't need to be taking medication when we have fish from our lakes as a by-product of that.

All of these issues are being addressed in the Great Lakes Protection Act. We are measuring, we are identifying, a host of problems—we're doing that.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Premier Wynne and Premier Couillard have worked very closely. I worked with my colleague the Minister of the Environment from Quebec. We spent two days together during the March break. We spent a lot of time talking about the St. Lawrence River. I'm very happy to report to the House that the government of Quebec will be working with us with complementary legislation. So Quebec is now—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They have some additional problems, because a part of the issue of climate change is that Quebec City, as you know, the capital of our sister province to the east, is very close to the ocean. What's happening is that the saltwater/freshwater line is moving back inland, which is compromising Quebec's water supply. They have a big challenge now with the changing climate and the changing nature of where fresh water begins and ends. So flows on the St. Lawrence River are very, very important to our sister province in the federation, and we're very happy to have Quebec as an ally and a collaborator on looking at the entire ecosystem of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River watersheds. I think it's a great step forward for the protection of biodiversity that we are able to work as two federalists governments committed to seeing the benefits to the environment and to our quality of life on that issue.

I want to take a little time and just thank people. In the aftermath of Walkerton, one of the initiatives that came out was source water protection. If you're a member just about anywhere in this province—there's only a few parts in the north—I would highly recommend that whatever party you're in, you meet with your source water protection folks. I think we're now at about 14 of 21 source water protection plans approved. This is an amazing process. These are farmers, businesspeople, community activists, there are local mayors. These have been much more complex plans than we expected them to be.

0920

It's interesting—we were talking about Gogama the other day, and I know many members in all parties who represent that area. Do you know that we did not have anything for oil spills or rails in the source water protection plan? And when we started doing that, we went down the road and—you know, you trust local know-

ledge here and you think all of us know our communities really well. I think one of the things I like about the source water protection—but we're now going back to some of those plans in partnership with those communities and now assessing rail risk to water supplies. Because when that ice melts, we're going to have to be out there quite aggressively looking at the fresh water and the freshwater supplies.

The member for Huron-Bruce points out, as I said earlier, when we talked about invasive species, many of these things can have significant impacts on our water supply. I think it's good when we downplay the partisanship in here on these things that we share a passion on and tap the local knowledge of members of Parliament who bring forward ideas.

I'm looking forward to working both with the member from Huron-Bruce and the member for Toronto-Danforth, who is my critic in the third party and who I also want to compliment as well, because Mr. Tabuns, the member from Toronto-Danforth, has a long and very well-respected record as an environmental activist. I know the member for Huron-Bruce has deep roots in the farm community and in the concerns of rural communities, and she has already been outspoken, and very credibly so, on these issues.

I'm hoping that the three of us can work with my parliamentary assistant, again, the member from Mississauga-Brampton South—I don't want to mess that up—on this issue. I'm actually very blessed, Mr. Speaker: I only have one grandchild but have I two parliamentary assistants, who are like my family. They seem to like me a lot better than my kids and my grandkid.

The member from Sudbury, as well, is particularly interested in this. Sudbury has had issues with their water supply, with blue-green algae. Fortunately, it didn't go toxic. I know, from having the benefit of having a team of the three of us at the ministry, I get some pretty interesting perspectives from both suburban and northern and rural Ontario on that, and I think you'll see, as this bill goes forward, that thoughtfulness brought to bear.

I'm going to try and leave—are you okay if you have 40 minutes? Can you do 40 minutes?

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You can do anything. You're a teacher. I'm going to wrap up in a minute, Speaker.

I just want to say, I want to thank all of the Ontarians—rural, urban, suburban, from all walks of life—who took a lead in this. I want to thank ministers past, Minister Wilkinson, Minister Gerretsen, Minister Bradley—all who had a hand in this.

I'm hoping this is three times the charm. This is the third time we have discussed this bill. I think a lot of people who have put so much time into this over the years outside of government, who were volunteers and who see their fingerprints on this bill and rightly lay claim to its authorship, would be quite happy and I think would feel that their time was respected and their energy was respected if we could pass this bill.

Again, I want to thank the member for Huron-Bruce in advance, I'm looking forward to her comments, and

the member for Toronto-Danforth. I think this is a great piece of legislation that many people in all our communities worked on, friends of ours, so that we can get this through and we can make it a better bill through the committee process. I look forward to the end.

I will now turn it over to that most remarkable of teachers, my parliamentary assistant. Thank you and God bless.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's an honour to join Mr. Murray in supporting the government's proposed Great Lakes Protection Act. Mr. Murray is working very hard, day in and day out—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just like to remind the member we refer to titles and not names.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Okay. My minister, the Minister of the Environment, is working very hard, day in, day out, so that he can leave a legacy of clean air and clean water for generations to come.

As we all know, the Great Lakes are an essential part of our heritage. They're also indispensable to our future. As the Minister of the Environment said in his statement, this is a unique piece of legislation. Yes, this is a unique piece of legislation. The question arises, why is this unique and important piece of legislation necessary?

The Great Lakes are truly a global treasure. More than 13 million people in the province of Ontario rely on the Great Lakes in one way or another, for such things as drinking water, food, electricity, employment and enjoyment. Healthy Great Lakes are vital to the success of our province. In fact, the Great Lakes regional economy is the fourth-largest in the world.

The Great Lakes contain 20% of the world's fresh surface water and contribute billions of dollars every year to our economy through agriculture, shipping, clean hydro power, fisheries and tourism, to name a few. Fortunately, this government has made water protection and the protection of our aquatic ecosystems a top priority.

As we heard from our minister, the proposed act, if passed, would help to ensure our Great Lakes are restored, protected and made more resilient to the effects of climate change here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the memories of the December 2013 ice storm are still fresh in our minds, when thick ice knocked down trees and electricity cables and made our roads impassable. People were without electricity and without food for days and days. This is how climate change is impacting our lives.

We have seen it this past winter. I have heard people saying in the greater Toronto area that they have never seen that cold a winter, with minus 30, minus 37, minus 40 degrees consecutively for two months. This is all as a result of climate change.

We can see the impact of climate change in Ontario even today, as severe weather phenomena become more common, such as heavy downpours, which are now twice as common as they were a century ago. Rainfall and snowfall events are more extreme. Flooding and droughts are more common.

The proposed act also builds on actions we are taking to reduce harmful algal blooms, promote environmental stewardship and help local communities and partners to take action.

Ontario, as an ecosystem—a system that includes its people—is dominated by the Great Lakes and the rivers and water systems that feed them. The proposed Great Lakes Protection Act is an important piece of legislation that will focus solely on our largest source of fresh water and home to thousands of fish and wildlife species.

The Minister of the Environment outlined the challenges and pressures facing the Great Lakes and the types of problems we need to address. We work with many dedicated partners across the province who have told us how important this proposed act would be for the health of our Great Lakes. These partners have important environmental concerns, such as protecting valuable wetlands around the lakes and restoring natural shorelines.

But they also recognize that a healthy economy requires a healthy environment. Without the Great Lakes, Ontario simply would not be the great province that it is today. Almost 75% of Canada's manufacturing, along with 80% of Ontario's power generation and 95% of our agricultural lands, depends on the Great Lakes. Throughout Ontario, and in my own community of Mississauga-Brampton South, a centre of manufacturing and population growth, the importance of this essential relationship may not be widely enough understood.

0930

This government intends to work with all of our Great Lakes partners when it comes to doing what needs to be done. One important feature of the proposed act is the formation of the Great Lakes Guardians' Council. It would be a forum for collaboration and co-operation, and a place for sharing knowledge and resources. The council's members would include provincial ministers that have responsibilities related to the Great Lakes. It would also include, as our minister said, municipal representatives and partners from First Nations and Métis communities. Other invited contributors would include partners from environmental groups, industry, farmers, recreation and tourism, and the science community.

This sort of collaboration would allow the Ontario government or other public bodies, such as municipalities or conservation authorities, to develop and implement a plan to address priority issues in a specific location.

The council is also empowered by the proposed legislation to discuss targets and developing local and/or regional initiatives to support the people who want to restore and protect their corner of the Great Lakes.

The council could have input into implementing inter-jurisdictional agreements seeking to protect the lakes, such as the recently signed Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement that was strengthened in 2012 by the governments of Canada and the US. In amending the agreement, Canada and the US addressed the spread of invasive species and the loss of habitat and indigenous species within the Great Lakes.

Both of these new agreements outline commitments for considering climate change impacts on the Great Lakes, which is also a very real and important aspect of Bill 66. Commitments that Ontario made under the new Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health will support provincial Great Lakes goals and targets, and Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy.

The proposed act would advance the implementation of existing agreements, enable the province to take action quickly in acute situations, and focus on preventing conditions in the Great Lakes from deteriorating.

In addition, the proposed act requires the regular review, reporting on and maintenance of Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy. The strategy is the road map that sets out our vision, goals and priorities to help restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes. The strategy focuses government resources across ministries, and benefits from the ideas and advice of other government and non-government partners.

Regular reviews of the strategy, as this act would require, would allow us to respond to emerging issues and new science and establish new milestones on our way to restoring and protecting the Great Lakes.

Good science, research and monitoring partnerships will also help support the Great Lakes work by providing the knowledge and data to help identify issues, set priorities, establish Great Lakes targets, and guide effective restoration and protection initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of the Environment said, First Nations and Métis communities that have a historic relationship with the Great Lakes may wish to contribute traditional ecological knowledge for the purposes of assisting in actions done under this proposed act. It's very, very important that we must take action—if we don't take action now, then when?

We want all Ontarians to renew their own connection to our Great Lakes. Together, we can help to ensure clean, healthy and resilient Great Lakes.

In closing, I would encourage all members of this House to support the vision of healthy Great Lakes for a stronger Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today to share comments on the opening comments on Bill 66. Thank you, Minister, for your comments, and to the PA; I appreciate it.

One thing that stuck with me, that I feel I have to reflect upon, is how the minister talked of the importance of trying to work together and downplay partisanship. He may not even know this happened, but I feel I need this opportunity to demonstrate it—and I really hope he encourages his partners, in terms of his PAs, as well as his staff, to walk that talk as well—because on March 11 there was a Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence given in my riding, in the town where my constituency office is. The award was given to Murray and Wilma Scott. Their farm, literally, is two concessions

south of where I grew up. I grew up knowing the Scott family very well; I hung out with their twin daughters; Murray served on the council my mom was clerk-treasurer-administrator for, for 35 years. I was really, really disappointed that I did not know about the award, nor did I receive an invitation to be there when it was somebody from home. Murray was my 4-H Calf Club leader for the entire time I was involved in 4-H. I found it very, very disappointing.

I would just like to use this moment to share with the minister that I do want to work together on this, but I need to see it going both ways. The environment is very, very important. I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout-out to what Wilma and Murray were recognized for. It's an amazing initiative—a farmer initiative—whereby they built berms, they developed a new channel, a new wetlands, on their farm. It's just indicative of how Ontario farmers across this province are good environmental stewards, and they want to do right.

I thank you for this opportunity to share this message.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add some comments to the debate and to second reading of Bill 66. I listened intently to the minister; I hope he could tell that I was interested in what he was saying and appreciated some of his comments. He hit on the more pressing, poignant issues that I think our communities around the Great Lakes basin face, particularly around invasive species.

Minister, *Bythotrephes longimanus*, the spiny water flea, is invading, certainly, our Great Lakes, but it is a real problem for commercial and sport fishing in Lake Erie. It's something we definitely have to do.

We support the intent of the bill; it is an incarnation of a previous bill. We see it as setting some—it's enabling legislation, but it sets targets. It's a plan to set a plan, which is not necessarily a plan, but not something we can necessarily disagree with, but we would like to see some hard targets. We'd like to see some initiatives that, I think, the state of Ohio has even recently taken to address algal blooms. We know that they've suffered—and the minister referenced Toledo, Ohio, where my brother lives, where there was a period of time where they couldn't drink their water in the municipal system in Toledo, last year, I believe. The Republican-led chamber, the Ohio Senate, and I believe the House has just passed a bill, Bill 1, from the Senate, which will prohibit farms from fertilizing fields when fields are frozen or saturated or if weather calls for rain. This is something that's really proactive, something that they're addressing head-on.

0940

My hope is that this legislation gives the ministry and the minister the ability to set those types of regulations into force and to address those issues head-on. We certainly do need to study them but we most definitely need action on the most pressing issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: On the way in this morning, there was an old Elvis song on the radio. It kind of caught my attention. I was thinking of the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change as well as my old friend Elvis. Elvis famously said, "You don't know what you've got until you lose it. You gave me all your love, but I abused it. And now I'm sorry for the things I didn't say"—and you could add "or do"—to protect the Great Lakes, the greatest freshwater system in the world.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Where's Elvis when we need him?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's right. He'd be 84 now if he were still out there somewhere.

We have about one fifth of the entire world's freshwater supply. It has the potential to continue to be clean and beautiful and bountiful and fresh and drinkable. It continues to have the potential to be the key ingredient, the key puzzle piece, to strategic, keen and green economic growth. We don't want to lose that or abuse it. We want to respect it and nurture it and make sure that we do everything we can to do to protect it.

The United Nations, about two weeks ago, came out with a report which talked about the water shortage worldwide. About one fifth of the world right now does not have adequate access to potable, drinkable, water. The UN predicts that, within 20 years, that will be half the world and that the world will be going literally to war over water. I've spent time in the Middle East; I know how that has worked out historically there. So we need to take care of it.

This act is a great step, and I support it. I hope all members of the Legislative Assembly in their cumulative wisdom will—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Question and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very happy to rise today to speak on this very important bill. It's funny, because as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing just said, I was thinking, "You don't know what you've got until it's gone," and he said something very similar.

Last week I was over in Taiwan. We really don't appreciate, I think, what we have here. We live in probably the best country in the world in terms of freshwater supply, in terms of available land, even in terms of clean air—it was quite smoggy over there near China—and in terms of natural resources: minerals, natural gas, and oil.

I hope that we're not going to be going to war over water, but maybe we have to consider that when we're training our troops: what could be lying ahead in terms of not just fighting overseas but also protecting what we have on our own land. We need to protect it by keeping the water clean, and we need to protect it in terms of not being attacked for our water supply in future generations.

I love to go up to lakes. I think that a lot of people from Toronto like to spend time on our many lakes. My dad is up just north of Peterborough. I don't recall as a kid having to put on water shoes to protect our feet from zebra mussels, but soon after he moved in, we learned, about 15 years ago, that you do have to wear water shoes because of the zebra mussels on all the rocks. They're

nasty little creatures. But when the carp, I believe it was, were killed because of a bacterial infection in the lakes, we noticed that the zebra mussels were gone. I think that that really teaches us a little bit about the cycle and that everything we do affects so many other things. That's what we have to be cognizant of.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We now have two minutes for the minister's response.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much. I just want to address a couple of issues.

I was concerned about some of the comments by my friend from Huron-Bruce. I apologize. We invite all MPPs—we had a reception here for those. The Scott family wasn't able to come for the reception. There were MPPs there, and they usually wait until the folks confirm. I didn't realize that was the ministry policy. I don't think it makes sense, so my apologies, and we'll change that.

But we should find a proper place and time to present it formally to Wilma and Murray—great folks—and I would love to do that with you. I wasn't even aware of it until after, so that's a bureaucratic process which you and I can change, because I share your concern. It certainly was not a partisan slight.

To my friend from Windsor-Essex: Thank you very much. We share that concern. I think the Ohio legislation is very complementary. We're enabling some of it in our structure, through municipalities, because our things are a little different. We're enabling that, and I think we can work to get that.

To my favourite Elvis fan, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Thank you very much for that wonderful display of support for the bill.

To my parliamentary assistant: As always, thanks very much.

That gives me about 52 seconds.

I just want to be clear: I don't want to leave people with the impression that we were co-drafting legislation with Quebec. That's not actually what we're doing. We actually worked with Quebec on the input. We've been reviewing it, and we're working on our implementation plans with them down the St. Lawrence River.

I just got one of those panic notes you get from political staff sometimes, saying, "Minister, I hope you didn't mean to say something you didn't mean to say." We all have political staff who start conversations by saying things like, "What the minister meant to say was," so I will correct my record right there, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very exciting opportunity. My friend from Windsor-Essex talked about the things that we're doing now with microbeads, which is something that has now caught the imagination of both our parties.

I think there's a huge opportunity to advance, because I don't think this is the last word in Great Lakes protection. I think this is the beginning of what will hopefully be many efforts in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm happy to have the opportunity to address the House today with regard to Bill 6, Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015.

I just want to revisit the purpose of Bill 66, which is:

"(a) to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and

"(b) to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin."

I'm curious to know, Speaker, in this House, how many members know the total number of ridings that are affected by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Forty.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's all but four. Yes, the member from Essex is very, very close—no, you said 40. All but four ridings are affected by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin, so it should be of interest to us all in this House.

Before I get started, I thought it was very timely that in *Better Farming* magazine, March 2015, there's a significant article: "An Ontario Phosphorus Reduction Strategy"—"Farm organizations seek a 'farmer-driven, science-based blueprint.'"

I want to share the call-out at the start of this article, because it puts everything in perspective.

I might say, just before I share the call-out, Speaker, that a number of conservation and environmental initiatives mentioned in this article actually come from my great riding of Huron-Bruce.

The call-out reads as such: "With the Ontario government just beginning to develop its approach and many questions unanswered, regulation is the elephant in the room for the farming community. If it comes, says one farmer, 'it had better be based on good science.'"

Speaker, that's what I really want to lay down as the premise of my one-hour leadoff. Ideology does not lead to good policy. We have to make sure that what we're doing is not redundant and what we're doing is feasible, workable and embraced by the community.

With that, I would like to continue on with some very specific comments.

It goes without saying that the PC Party of Ontario is supportive of improving and protecting the environment and our Great Lakes ecosystems. Bill 66 has raised some serious questions with regard to the duplication of governance, the absence of funding, the passing reference to consideration of economic or social impacts, the appointment of guardians' councils with the power to set fees and the potential for further erosion in the power of local planning authorities.

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The protection of our province's natural heritage is important to all Ontarians, and the Great Lakes are an integral economic driver for tourism, transportation, agriculture and fishing industries. They provide fresh water for communities, recreational opportunities and habitat for wildlife.

For many lakeshore communities, like I have in my riding of Huron-Bruce, the Great Lakes are also an important part of their historical and cultural heritage. Protecting the health and vibrancy of the Great Lakes is

essential for stimulating economic development, providing jobs and ensuring continued prosperity for lakeshore communities. It is our duty, Speaker, to restore and preserve these resources for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

As I said earlier, my riding of Huron-Bruce is blessed to border the shoreline of Lake Huron, and the lake plays a crucial role in the day-to-day life of residents. The shoreline communities are a beehive of activity during the warmer months, and they take a great deal of pride—people who live on the shoreline, that is—in welcoming visitors to their beaches and establishments.

Local municipal councils are keenly aware of their responsibility to be good stewards of the environment, as local residents are proactive in protecting and enhancing the beaches, harbours and lakeshore region.

Generations of Ontarians—and I'm sure everyone sitting in the House today can appreciate or know of or have enjoyed growing up spending vacation time on the shores—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask those who are having conversations to kind of lower the tone?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate that, Speaker

What I want to say is that Ontarians across this province know people or have experienced growing up spending vacation time themselves on the shores of our Great Lakes. I imagine many people here today, as I said, have fond memories.

I, myself, have been very, very fortunate that when we went to the beach, we went to Bruce Beach. It's just south of Kincardine. My aunt and uncle always welcomed all of us in my family to use their beach in front of their cottage.

There's so much history. There are so many connections and families that come together in the spirit of their beach community. Everyone—the farmers—the farmland leading into the shoreline—the towns and, as I said, municipal councils—they all want to work together to do what's right to protect our Great Lakes, because not only do they have natural beauty, but there are fish habitats and the tourism industry.

When I talk about fish habitats—if I can find it quickly—I just want to note that there are so many initiatives in my riding to protect what we've come to enjoy in our Great Lakes. Just this past Saturday, I attended a ceremony hosted by the Kincardine and District Chamber of Commerce. They gave out their 2015 Community Achievement Awards. In the environmental category, which was presented to a “business, organization or individual that is guided by a sense of responsibility and respect for the environment, which manifests it through initiatives designed to preserve, conserve or improve the local environment,” I'm really pleased to say that the Kincardine Fish Hatchery was the recipient of the award this year.

I share that with you, because one of the things that Lake Huron offers to so many people is wonderful

fishing. This past year, I participated in the local chinook chantry. While I caught trout, a colleague of mine from the area caught a beautiful 12-pound chinook. I can tell the difference now between a chinook and a coho. It was a very good day and time well spent.

Fish habitats: Our local communities are working so hard to ensure that people have fishing to enjoy on our Great Lakes. We have to do and be cognizant of so much in order to maintain the health of our lakeshores and our ecological systems in the waters.

I just want to lay it down right now and get the elephant out of the room: Protecting our Great Lakes, especially given the documentary that was debuted on TVO last night called *Big Wind*—we have to agree in this House today that part of protecting the Great Lakes should include not putting industrial wind turbines in the water.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I knew that was coming.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, it has to be. If we're dedicated to protecting our Great Lakes, we have to keep the industrial wind turbines out of them. We don't know. We don't have the local freshwater science to substantiate the pros and cons, so let's just stay away from it, especially when, here in Ontario, we don't need any energy, as we continue to pay jurisdictions to take our surplus off our hands. With that said and parked—and it was an important message to say—we cannot have industrial wind turbines in our water. The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Innovation certainly would echo that, as he did ahead of the 2011 election. I'm sure, as all three caucuses in this House, we will agree to maintain that promise to protect our Great Lakes.

In saying that, there are other challenges to our Great Lakes, just not the threat of industrial wind turbines. Other challenges facing the Great Lakes that are crucial to be identified and addressed are the direct resources to front-line programs to address problems, such as algal blooms; invasive species like Asian carp and phragmites; agricultural runoff; chemical contamination; and sewage overflows. Targets and remedial measures must be based on expert science advice.

The government should work with the First Nations and Métis communities, to understand their perspective and how traditional ecological knowledge can help identify and address challenges. I appreciate the fact that the minister actually said earlier today that it is a priority to engage with First Nations and Métis, and I thank him for that.

I would also like to revisit the Premier's opening statement at ROMA about the value of a provincial government applying a rural lens on its decision-making, and challenges created when the lens is overlooked.

Speaker, I want to share with you that the rural lens is very important, and I'll be addressing it later in my comments, and I'm thrilled that ROMA has adopted the rural lens. A driver behind the rural lens is a professor from the University of Guelph, Wayne Caldwell. He was a planner at the county of Huron as well, so he has vast experience in understanding the impact of legislation on rural communities and urban communities.

I hope the Premier stands tall to her commitment that the rural lens is very important, because during her speech at ROMA, the Premier acknowledged that the success of Ontario's agri-food sector and that of the province are inseparable, and that reducing regulation needs to be an ongoing effort. I'll repeat that: The Premier, during ROMA, said specifically that the success of Ontario's agri-food sector and that of the province are inseparable, and that reducing regulation needs to be an ongoing effort.

That's where I raise a flag, Speaker, because I'm not sure whether Bill 66 will do that. Bill 66 has raised concerns with Ontario agricultural stakeholders, much like I said, in the March issue of *Better Farming*. It's the front cover story.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great stories.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: There are great stories in there. That's right, Minister.

We're concerned that Bill 66 could conflict with or override other legislation that farmers must work under, like the Nutrient Management Act, the Clean Water Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, and the Environmental Protection Act, as well as local municipal bylaws.

Ontario farmers have played a significant role in environmental stewardship programs since 2005, and agricultural leaders are calling for the government to ensure that Bill 66 does not result in potential conflicts, leading to confusion, delay and more restrictive regulations governing agricultural operating practices.

I heard that very same concern expressed just this past week at the AGM for Grain Farmers of Ontario, but we'll touch on that a little bit later.

Agriculture is a major economic driver, not only in my riding of Huron—Bruce but right across this province. As Bill 66 has the power to supersede nutrient management and other legislation pertaining to agriculture, we need to proceed carefully and work with stakeholders to balance environmental concerns with economic ones.

One nutrient that has a significant impact on the health of the Great Lakes is phosphorus. We all know that. Some areas of the Great Lakes have more phosphorus than they should, and intervention is indeed required to reduce phosphorus to more appropriate levels. Excessive levels of phosphorus contribute, as you may guess, to algal growth and certain types of blue-green algae, and other species may produce toxins that are harmful to both humans and wildlife. We all want to do our part in correcting this, and ongoing efforts to upgrade municipal waste water treatment plants and limit phosphorus levels have been successful in reducing phosphorus levels, particularly in Lakes Ontario and Huron.

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The Nutrient Management Act has done a good job of dealing with phosphorus coming from farms, but we also need to recognize that a considerable portion of the pollution originates in the United States. I ask the minister this: Can the Liberal government realistically set targets for transboundary pollution issues? We know where the greatest source of phosphorus is coming from in Lake

Erie. So I repeat that question: Can the Liberal government realistically set targets for transboundary pollution issues?

A retired forester and MNR employee recently contacted my office with some excellent suggestions on environmental stewardship, and I feel it would be worthwhile to share them with you today. He advised that the government should continue to work with the agricultural sector to address erosion and runoff by encouraging practices like Murray and Wilma Scott have embraced, like grassed waterways, buffer strips of grass and trees, plow-down crops, contour plowing, restricting livestock access to water and reduced tillage.

Speaker, again I suggest to you that we are very, very fortunate that a lot of these initiatives have been voluntarily embraced because farmers above all else want to be good stewards of our land.

This former employee of MNR also recommended protecting wetlands, which filter water and contribute to improved water quality. He pointed out that forests are only protected if they are provincially significant areas of natural and scientific interest, although the province allows municipalities to designate forest as significant for planning purposes. He identified toxic sewage sludge, which is removed from waste water and spread on agricultural lands, as a source of Great Lakes pollution that should be addressed as well.

Here in this House, as legislators, we have discussed the threat aquatic invasive species pose to biodiversity in the Great Lakes. My colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk has warned us of the damage that Asian carp could do if allowed to enter the waterways. We've also described, on both sides of the House and including the third party, how phragmites are spreading along the shoreline and choking out wetlands.

He also pointed out—my colleague from Haldimand, that is—that these invasive species have not only posed an ecological threat, they also have an estimated \$7.5-billion impact on forestry and farming, and that impact is in the negative sense.

In Huron—Bruce, a group of concerned citizens approached authorities for assistance with phragmites, which are growing out of control along our shoreline. Where cottages and homeowners once had a lovely beach, there are only phragmites, and the remaining beach was unable and unsafe to be walked on due to phragmite roots. Everybody is doing their part. I've talked to people who, when phragmites come in to seed, they painstakingly cut off the heads of the phragmite and very carefully drop them into little baggies so the seeds do not hit the ground.

Everyone in my riding is cognizant of the negative impact of phragmites. In my riding, residents have approached local municipal councils and officials, and together they began the long and difficult task of having the problem assessed. Through filling out of the paperwork, they hope that they can work toward a treatment that will address this issue. But unfortunately, this is a time-consuming and trying procedure that it should not have been. Phragmites are a recognized threat and spread

quickly, so it should not be a convoluted procedure to report and control them.

In terms of improving Bill 66, that is an area in terms of amendments that our party is going to be addressing. I would also like to suggest that this is one area in which the government should increase engagement with municipal officials and local conservation authorities and streamline the remediation process.

Another ongoing threat to the Great Lakes has been the invasion of zebra mussels. My colleague and friend from Thornhill very adeptly addressed the issue in the lake that she calls home with her father, and I thank her for that. Zebra mussels have led to water quality concerns and they too encourage the growth of algae.

In saying that, I want to get into more detail about some of the problems with Bill 66 in areas that we hope we can work together on to improve.

A number one issue in this bill is the duplication of governance. While recognizing the importance of a healthy and prosperous Great Lakes region, there are still elements of Bill 66 which warrant sober second thought. The PC Party has certainly been supportive of the existing framework to protect water quality and to establish meaningful partnerships with the private sector to develop new technologies to remediate areas of concern.

There have been Great Lakes governance agreements between Canada and the United States, and between the federal and provincial governments, for more than 40 years. If there was a pressing need for more legislation, I question why the Liberal government has waited so long to act. We also need to examine if the areas of concern and challenges facing the Great Lakes should be addressed under Bill 66, or could they not be better dealt with under existing agreements?

Is more legislation really needed to protect the Great Lakes? We need to be mindful of this. To my mind, the Liberals have not provided a clear explanation as to why Bill 66 is necessary when we have extensive regulatory frameworks already in place. If they cannot demonstrate areas of concern that are not being adequately addressed, then why are they proposing a comprehensive piece of legislation that may well create conflicts and confusion, burden municipalities and development with increased costs and red tape, and reduce local planning authority? Speaker, I have to remind you again that we saw a documentary on TVO last night that saw the results of the loss of local municipal autonomy. Do we want to create another burden and another threat that further reduces local decision-making? I so hope not. Stewardship programs do not need another layer of bureaucracy; they need adequate funding, which Bill 66 does not appear to provide.

Unfortunately, the introduction of Bill 66 reminds me, as I mentioned earlier, of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. I have to ask once more if this government is again proposing far-reaching legislation simply to appease special interest groups and to create the illusion of protecting the environment. Ontario cannot afford another ill-advised policy which does nothing but down-

load costs to municipal governments and complicate and confuse the environmental processes that we already have in place.

Given the province's skyrocketing debt and deficit situation, one also has to consider that Bill 66 may just be another revenue tool to satisfy the finance minister and an opportunity to further download costs and to raise money through the levy of fees and penalties. Again, Ontario has a huge burden because of the last decade of Liberal mismanagement. We cannot afford another ill-advised and misplaced piece of legislation.

To continue, I would now like to outline some of the existing agreements which provide protection to the Great Lakes.

Canada and the United States have established the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. Under this agreement, the US and Canadian governments have identified—I'm going to go through the whole list, because we do not want Bill 66 to provide unnecessary, redundant pieces of legislation. The US and Canadian governments, under the Great Lakes water agreement, have identified the need to:

- develop water quality and ecosystem health objectives and report progress to the public regularly;

- clean up areas of concern in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin;

- develop a comprehensive lake-wide management plan to protect and remediate near-shore waters;

- reduce toxic chemicals in the Great Lakes, like mercury and PCBs;

- reduce nutrients like phosphorus that lead to the growth of algal blooms that degrade drinking water quality, impair fish spawning and adversely impact commercial and recreational fishing, swimming, tourism and the overall enjoyment of the Great Lakes;

- prevent discharges from shipping vessels, such as garbage, sewage, invasive species and other pollutants;

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- stop the spread of invasive species by developing and implementing early detection and rapid response programs;

- complete the development of and begin implementing lake-wide habitat and species protection, restoration and conservation strategies within two years;

- identify contaminants in groundwater discharged into the Great Lakes;

- develop plans to protect and restore near-shore areas, the primary source of drinking water for Great Lakes communities;

- reaffirm actions necessary to restore and delist areas of concern;

- identify new toxic substances and implement pollution prevention and control strategies; and, lastly,

- develop conservation strategies to protect native species and restore habitat.

This comprehensive agreement also requires Canada and the United States to address the use of toxic

substances in the basin and to develop action plans for areas of concern, which are regions that have significant environmental challenges.

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement has an oversight body called the International Joint Commission to oversee the development and implementation of these goals. So again, I caution: Is Bill 66 going to set up a redundant layer of bureaucracy and Liberal-friendly appointments that Ontario can't afford at this time?

Speaker, to go back to the International Joint Commission, I would like to share with you that this particular commission oversees the remediation of 15 areas of concern by ensuring that parties have action plans in place. Ontario is responsible for addressing challenges in seven of Canada's 10 areas of concern, including Nipigon Bay, Jackfish Bay, Peninsula Harbour, Spanish Harbour, Wheatley Harbour, the Niagara River and the Bay of Quinte.

Over and above the International Joint Commission, Ontario is also a member of the Great Lakes Charter, an agreement signed by Ontario, Quebec and eight of the Great Lakes states in 1985 to address concerns related to water diversion in the Great Lakes basin.

The governments of Canada and Ontario also signed a draft Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health—COA—in 2014. Are we seeing a pattern here? There are already a lot of initiatives taking place. Again, I caution: Does Bill 66 just introduce another layer of redundancy that this province can't afford?

Going back to the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, which was founded in 2014, I want to share that the COA, as it's known, establishes a domestic action plan to guide co-operation and the coordination of efforts to restore, protect and conserve Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem health over five years.

I'd like to point out to you, as we wind down to the break, what the COA deals with: nutrients; harmful pollutants; discharges from vessels; areas of concern; lake-wide management; aquatic invasive species; habitat and species; groundwater quality; climate change impacts; science; promoting innovation; engaging communities; engaging First Nations; and engaging Métis.

Speaker, I worry, and again I caution, that Ontario cannot afford another layer of redundant legislation that does nothing more than download more costs to Ontarians throughout this province.

At that, I think you may want me to take a break.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Keep going? Okay. Speaker, I would love to keep going because I have so much to say on this particular bill.

Let me talk about the Conservation Authorities Act. This particular act gives the government the power to regulate the development of shorelines for watershed management, and the Planning Act provides municipalities with the authority to regulate shoreline development. As well, the government has the Toxics Reduction Act

and the Environmental Protection Act to deal with harmful pollutants.

As you can see, numerous pieces of legislation offer a framework for the protection of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Again, I question why Ontario does not simply fulfill its commitments under these existing agreements. There is no need to overlap and duplicate governance. Where is this particular gap that necessitates Bill 66? Speaker, I ask: What steps will the government take to prevent overlap and to ensure all new regulations will be coordinated with Ontario's existing water legislation?

Bill 66 could potentially affect a number of acts; for example, the Planning Act; the Condominium Act, 1998; the Greenbelt Act, 2005; the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act; and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. It's very much a concern.

I come back to the title article from Better Farming March 2015. I want to revisit the call-out that kicks off this article: "With the Ontario government just beginning to develop its approach and many questions unanswered, regulation is the elephant in the room for the farming community" and across Ontario, I might add—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Now we'll let you end.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to welcome to the chamber today two young constituents of mine, Liza Kanopatyaika and Louis Vatr. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce the family of page Demily Bello Thibodeau, with her father being Richard Thibodeau; Havana Thibodeau; Joanne Thibodeau; and also the very beautiful and young Betsabel Thibodeau.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the west members' gallery today I believe I see Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and Keith Currie, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Members of the executive of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture had the opportunity to meet with these wonderful folks earlier this morning. We welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce the zone 11 director on behalf of the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. I want to introduce our director, Eleanor Renaud, from the OFA.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce a few people who are all the way from Timmins. First of all, our school board trustee and the president of the professional firefighters association, Peter Osterberg. He is here with both Bill and Caroline, his parents, who are visiting along with him.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to issue a very warm welcome to some of my constituency office staff from the riding of Pickering—Scarborough East. We have Helen Walker, Kassandra Cruciano and Farah Khan. These great team members are here at Queen's Park and we're going to have lunch together, which we never get to do in the consti office. We're going to do that today.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to recognize Farhana Haji and Hanif Haji; they are in the members' gallery. They are the parents of our page captain today, Alysa. Thank you very much for joining us.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the Legislature today are recipients of the IGNITE program funding, which supports Pan Am community outreach programs. We'll be having a reception at 6 o'clock this evening in committee rooms 228 and 230. I invite all members to join us.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the House today Debra Pretty-Straathof, a constituent of mine and also the OFA's zone 8 director for the counties of Annaprior, Lanark, Ottawa and Renfrew.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would also like to welcome the members of the OFA here today, specifically my director for northern Ontario, Peggy Brekfeld.

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to introduce Eleanor Fast, who is the mother of page Joe Fast from Ottawa South. I'd like to welcome her; she's in the east gallery today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to introduce Priya Pandya. She is the mom of another page captain today, Rahul. It's great to have her here all the way from Huron—Bruce.

I have two other introductions. I'd also like to warmly welcome Heather Copeland from Grober—I worked with her in my capacity as general manager with the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative; she represents Grober—and a dear friend of mine, who goes way back, is also with her today coming to the House: Crystal Mackay, executive director of Farm and Food Care Ontario.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's my pleasure to introduce some special guests today, they're the family of legislative page Max Ciuffetelli-Parker, who is our page captain today. In the House today are his mother, Dr. Darlene Ciuffetelli-Parker; his father, Mr. Craig Parker; and his sister—who is a former page, as well—Madeline Ciuffetelli-Parker. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome Pat Jilesen, a lamb and crop producer from Bruce county, a great volunteer and an OFA director at large—and all the members of the OFA.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir d'introduire aujourd'hui et présenter notre page, Jade Proulx, at the Legislative Assembly on behalf of Ottawa—Orléans. We're very proud to have you with us.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear purple ribbons in recognition of epilepsy awareness day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear ribbons for an epilepsy day. Do we agree? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you have said that the mandatory Ontario pension plan will be good for the province, yet your government has not released any evidence to support these claims. In fact, the only information you have released is an internal document warning your minister that the pension plan will cost Ontario 54,000 jobs a year.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has even said that your government, at a minimum, must conduct and publicly release an analysis of the impact of the new pension plan. So, Premier, will you include a cost-benefit analysis of the ORPP in the 2015 budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I know the associate minister is going to want to speak to this very important issue.

As the member knows, we made this commitment as a part of our budget and as a part of our platform, Mr. Speaker. It's a fundamental part of our plan for the economy, because we know that there are many, many people in Ontario who are not able to save enough, who are worried about retirement security. We believe that it is important that government take action to make sure that they have the ability to retire in security after a life of work. I'm surprised, actually, that anyone in this House would not think that it's a good idea for the people of Ontario to have retirement security.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Back to the Premier: Premier, you may not have evidence, but I do. The CFIB has said that over half its members will have to lay off workers—lay off workers. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has said that 44% of its members will have to reduce staff. We all—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. On both sides—on both sides—I'm having difficulty hearing the question being put, so please.

Finish, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need extra comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: We all know that it's impossible to save for retirement if you have no job. So, Premier,

will you commit to help save jobs in Ontario by walking away from the ORPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, it's very interesting, because people who have studied this issue and who understand the way people are able to prepare for their retirement pretty much—there's a lot of agreement among those experts that there are not enough people in this province, and in this country, quite frankly, saving for retirement.

Organizations like CARP, the organization of seniors across the country—they have no stake in this, because they're past the point where such a pension plan would benefit them—are one of the strongest advocates for us doing this. They believe that this is an important thing.

I believe that it is responsible for us to implement what we ran on. We were very clear with the people of Ontario, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Premier, we will lose more than just jobs if the ORPP goes through. The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association found that 78% of workplaces will reduce or eliminate their existing pension plans if they are forced to take part in the ORPP.

Premier, over the next week, the PC caucus will be laying out five key commitments we need to see from your government in order to support your budget. This is the first.

Will you commit in your 2015 budget to saving jobs and walking away from the ORPP?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I appreciate her raising the question in the House this morning, because Ontarians are concerned about their retirement. In fact, just this week, a study from RBC was released, and 34% of people have contributed to their—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't anticipate shouting people down for the sake of not hearing them.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: From that RBC study, only 39% of respondents have put away money in 2014 for retirement through their RRSP, and 30% said that they have not begun to save for their retirement. Ontarians expect their government to take action to ensure a secure retirement future. In fact, 77% of Ontarians support an increase in pension benefits.

It is for this reason that our government has put forward the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan: so that when people retire, they can retire with dignity and have a secure savings floor in their retirement.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Premier. Your government has caused a great deal of angst and hardship to our most vulnerable people by launching a messed-up social assistance computer system that you were warned was not ready for implementation. SAMS continues to be an unmitigated disaster.

Earlier this month, I raised concerns with problems that SAMS is going to cause with people's tax returns and related benefits, impacting as many as 700,000 adults and children dependent on ODSP and Ontario Works. We recently found out that you were forced to shred over a half a million T5 tax forms because of errors by your supposedly improved computer system.

Premier, are you prepared to continue to assert that your government's \$240-million—and climbing—social assistance system is experiencing a mere glitch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services is going to want to have more to say on this, but we've acknowledged that the implementation of the improved system has posed challenges. We understand that.

We also know that SAMS, which is the system that the member opposite is talking about, is a key component of the transformation of Ontario's social assistance program. It's very important that we have updated technology. There have been concerns and problems. The minister has visited offices. There is front-line support for people who are going through this transition. We have worked to make sure that cheques were put in people's hands so that they had the benefits that they were entitled to, but we need to implement a system that is going to improve service. That's exactly what we're doing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Why did you implement one that didn't work?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier: You suggested SAMS would be a better, more efficient system. Recently your government hired PricewaterhouseCoopers consultants to cover up your government's incompetence over SAMS implementation and issued not one but two rounds of so-called one-time—and, I might add, unbudgeted—funding to municipalities to mitigate the ongoing cost overruns with SAMS.

Premier, can you assure us that you will not download the cost of your SAMS mess on the backs of local taxpayers and guarantee a full 100% short- and long-term reimbursement to municipalities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, this SAMS system is being implemented because it will improve service to people. There's no question that there have been challenges—as, I would say, there were challenges when the party opposite instituted changes in terms of social assistance.

The implementation has to be improved; there's no question about that. I'm pleased that we've hired a third-party adviser to advise us, to improve the system.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's as it should be. We have to make these changes, as parties before us have made changes. We have to address the challenges as they come along. It's important that we have expert advice on how to do that, and that's exactly what we've sought out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order so I can acknowledge his colleague.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier: I think you should talk to the front-line people and the recipients who aren't receiving these, because it isn't an improved system.

People on social assistance deserve stability, peace of mind and the supports they rely on. They need to know you'll put a stop to this waste and start putting money where it belongs: into helping our 700,000 vulnerable adults and children who depend on this support.

As per my open letter—and I'm going to send you another copy here by page—Premier, I ask you again: How many more SAMS stumbles can we expect in the future, and how much will it cost the recipients and the taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to update the House on a number of the steps that we've been taking over the last few months to address the challenges in SAMS.

I have spent the last few months visiting many offices—both OW municipal partner offices as well as ODSP—and I have certainly seen the frustration of the caseworkers on the front line. This is why we've taken a number of steps. Our project team has instituted many fixes in order to make the system function much more smoothly. We're listening to front-line staff. I actually met with a number of CUPE and OPSEU representatives yesterday. I understand the stress that they have been through, but at the end of the day, we have been extremely successful. We have now processed four successful pay runs for both ODSP and OW monthly payments, payments to 570,000 families each month—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Can the Premier provide any guarantees that hydro rates will not go up as part of the Liberal plan to privatize Hydro One and local utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thought when the leader of the third party stood up that she was going to say how important she thought it was to give people in this province who are struggling, the lowest-income people, a break on hydro rates. I would have thought that would have been the kind of policy the NDP would support. In fact, it's the kind of policy that has been advocated for by poverty advocates.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Everybody's struggling under your hydro policy—everybody.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's not what this NDP is interested in.

To the question that the leader of the third party has brought forward, I've been very clear, and we were very clear in the election and in our budget, that we were going to have a review of assets, and that that review of assets was about investing in transportation infrastructure and transit. That is why we are doing it. At the same time, we recognize that price controls and regulation need to be very much in place and there needs to be continued ownership of those assets. All of those pieces are principles upon which we're making our decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think I heard the assurance I was looking for, because privatizing hydro means Ontarians are going to be paying higher hydro rates in this province. Mike Harris started down the hydro road and the Liberals are doubling down on that road.

If the Premier is so sure that privatizing Hydro One—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —is such a great deal, why won't she provide a simple guarantee to Ontarians that hydro rates will not go up under this privatization scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it's so interesting that the member opposite is talking about an issue that, of course, is decided by the Ontario Energy Board, and that regulation that I have said must stay in place will stay in place.

But on a day when the leader of the third party has the opportunity to talk about a policy that is going to lower electricity prices for the lowest-income people in this province, she's not interested in talking about that. She's not interested in talking about a policy that actually is part of a poverty reduction strategy, that actually supports people with the lowest income. That's a policy I would have thought the NDP would have been interested in.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, since 2002, hydro rates have gone up by more than 325%, and all the

Premier has for Ontarians is another—another—privatization scheme. She'll sell off our hydro companies, put them in private hands that just want to make more profit, but still somehow it's supposed to be better for Ontarians? So I'm going to ask one more time: Are hydro bills going up under the Premier's new, current privatization scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just talk about what the Ontario Electricity Support Program will do, because I think it is very relevant. I've already addressed the issue of price regulation and the protections that need to be in place, whatever we do with assets. The OESP is going to provide targeted support based on household income and size, Mr. Speaker, so it's a very strategic and surgical, I would say, benefit that will help people who are most in need.

As an example: A family of four with an income of less than \$28,000 would have a combined savings of about \$525 annually. That's a significant reduction. And as I say, on top of the other programs that we have in place to protect people who are struggling with their overall costs, this new program will help the lowest-income Ontarians. That's something that I think the NDP should be cheering.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Anybody who thinks the OEB is a price control agency is in la-la land, I've got to say.

My next question is to the Premier, Speaker. How many schools have been targeted for closure since the Premier introduced the 2014 budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me repeat what both the Minister of Education and I have said many times, and that is that we continue to invest in the education of the children of this province. The minister is going to be talking with school boards today, letting them know that the education funding is remaining stable and in fact in certain areas, like maintenance, increasing, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that school boards have to make decisions about delivering programs that make the most sense in their communities. I believe in the school boards' ability to do that on a local basis. Sometimes that means consolidating schools; sometimes that means renovating one school and moving kids into a newly renovated school; sometimes it does mean closing the school; sometimes it means building a new school. Those are decisions that local school boards need to make, working with the ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: From 2011 until the 2014 election, at least 88 schools closed across this province, but the Premier won't say how many more schools are being targeted for closure after the 2014 budget was first introduced. Today, school boards are learning how deep the Liberals will cut, and how much pressure they're going to have to close even more schools. How many more schools does the Premier think should be shut down in neighbourhoods across this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would have thought that the member opposite, the leader, would have been interested in the announcement that we made this morning, that in fact school board funding will be remaining stable this year. Speaker, last year the transfers to school boards amounted to \$22.5 billion. This year they'll amount to \$22.5 billion, despite the fact that enrolment is declining in Ontario, which means that there's actually a slight per pupil increase. But what I will say, Speaker, is that we think that it's more important to fund children and make sure they get good programs and good supports and good resources, rather than empty seats. That's exactly what we're doing in this year's funding model.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, everybody in this chamber and everybody around Ontario knows very well that a freeze is actually a cut. So the minister can talk about it all she wants, but freezing education funding is actually cutting education funding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Start the clock, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —and that means cuts to classroom support and layoffs for teachers and layoffs for education workers. The Toronto District School Board is already cutting 50 special education staff. Those are the staff who work with our most vulnerable children. Parents in the Toronto Catholic board are trying to protect their intensive special education support programs, which their children need.

Parents want the Premier to answer a simple question: Why are students being forced to pay for Liberal mistakes?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, I think it's also important for the member opposite to know that, if you look at the special education funding pot this year for schools across Ontario, you'll find that it actually goes up slightly even though the number of students is going down.

The member knows that the enrolment in Ontario schools has been going down and down and down and down. So you really need to look at how much we're spending per pupil. The spending per pupil has gone up 59% since 2003. The overall funding has gone up \$8 billion since 2003. So I absolutely disagree with the member opposite. We are funding the schools of Ontario absolutely adequately.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've promised to protect the social programs that Ontarians need and deserve, but evidence is clearly mounting that your failed economic policies are having

serious consequences on Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. Your failed policies have forced the Toronto District School Board to cut 50 special education assistants and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario to eliminate 50 positions. But even more disturbing than that is the fact that there are over 21,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities who are languishing on wait-lists, waiting desperately for the supports and services that they desperately need.

I have a very simple question for the Premier: Will she admit that her failed economic policies have consequences and are hurting Ontario's most vulnerable citizens?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a broad-ranging question, but what I will say to the member opposite is that I absolutely reject the premise of the question.

We've just had a conversation in this House about education funding, which is remaining stable in the face of declining enrolment and, in terms of special education, is actually going up. We've had a conversation in the past days about health funding, the 24,000 more nurses in the system than there were in 2003; 5,000 more doctors—and we're going through a transition. In terms of disabilities, in terms of funding for disabilities and developmental services, the fact is there is \$810 million going into that sector.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the programs that have long wait-lists, the money that is going into the system is going to reduce those wait-lists for developmental services. I already talked about special ed in education. Special education funding in schools is going up across the province overall, even though enrolment is declining.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: I asked a really simple question, but it's one that the Premier clearly wishes to avoid. The truth is obvious: In order to be socially compassionate, you first need to be fiscally responsible. Mr. Speaker, good economic policy enables good social policy.

Premier, your failed economic policies are having serious consequences. Just ask the students at the Toronto District School Board, ask the young patients at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, and ask the 21,000 children and adults, and their families, with intellectual disabilities why they're not getting the programs and services that they need and deserve.

Premier, will you finally recognize that your failed economic policies are having serious consequences and seriously affecting the lives of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the member opposite that she really can't have it both ways. Outside of this House, in her leadership campaign—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you haven't been able to tell by now, I'm asking for us to have a little bit of civility here. As soon as somebody stands up to answer, I hear shouting, and it's not appropriate.

So I'll ask the member from Nepean—Carleton to come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Me?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm obviously not in the mood for joking.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In her leadership campaign, she has promised that she will cut \$1 billion by way of a tax cut from the very services that she's talking about. The hundreds of millions of dollars that we're putting into education, that we're putting into health care and that we're putting into developmental services would be gone, because she's going to find \$1 billion according to her platform.

So I would ask the member opposite to make some consistent statements about what her plan would be, because what she's saying now does not make sense.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Both Pat Sorbara, your deputy chief of staff—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let me repeat again. I think they didn't like that.

Both Pat Sorbara, your deputy chief of staff and campaign director; and Mr. Sorbara, your Liberal operative in Ottawa—

Mr. Steve Clark: Loughheed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Loughheed, I should say—had a discussion with Mr. Olivier about his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I demand the same courtesy on both sides. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Pat Sorbara, your deputy chief of staff; and Mr. Loughheed, the local operator in Sudbury, had direct conversations with Mr. Olivier about standing down. My question to you is, were you aware that those conversations were going to take place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I take it that the member from Timmins—James Bay has taken on the responsibility of having at least having one question about an issue that we've discussed on several occasions in this House. The Premier has been absolutely clear that this matter is being dealt with by way of an investigation which is done by independent authorities outside this Legislature, and we should respect that process. Speaker, the notion of procedural fairness and natural justice in our system of democracy requires that we let arm's-length investigative bodies undertake their responsibilities. We should not be using this Legislature to be quarterback investigators. So

I urge the member opposite to respect the process, understand the notion of presumption of innocence and let the authorities complete the investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the Premier: I would urge you to answer the question. This Legislature has certain rights. Those rights were given to us by the Canadian Constitution and allow members to stand in this House to ask relevant questions having to do with issues that are important to Ontarians.

Your deputy chief of staff and your Liberal operator in Sudbury continually talked to Mr. Olivier about not running and standing down. So I'm going to ask the question again: Were you aware that these conversations were going to take place—yes or no?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we fully respect the right of the opposition to ask questions. We hope that they ask questions on issues that are important to Ontarians, like how we are giving a break to low-income Ontarians on their electricity rates or how we are making sure that we are investing in education.

Speaker, this is an investigation that is going on outside this Legislature. We have important issues to deal with as we build Ontario up. I ask the member opposite to let the authorities do their work. The Chief Electoral Officer was very clear when he said that he has not made any determination of innocence or of guilt because that is up to the prosecutors and judges to decide. We should respect his opinion. The member opposite himself has said on occasions that the Premier should not interfere in the investigation. He is absolutely right. This is exactly what she is doing.

While she's doing this, she will continue to focus on making sure that we're building Ontario up.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. Ontario has a proud history of having one of the most culturally and socially diverse populations in the world. It's important to recognize that this remarkable diversity also extends to our significant and growing senior population. In fact, more than 55% of all Canadian immigrant seniors live in the province of Ontario. As well, a larger portion of our two million seniors are female, and this difference increases greatly in the oldest age groups, where over 70% of persons aged 90 or older are female.

In my own riding of Davenport, there is a sizable and very diverse older adult community, and my senior constituents represent many different cultural, ethnic and social groups. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you please provide us with details regarding the programs and services our government is investing in to support seniors from diverse communities?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you to the member from Davenport for the question.

Speaker, we recognized this incredible diversity when we established, first in 2010, Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. I have to say that the member is quite right:

55%-plus of Canada's seniors' population lives in our province of Ontario. Nearly one third of those seniors report a mother tongue other than English and French, and 7%, especially new immigrants, don't speak any of our official languages.

Facing the reality of this diversity, our government long ago started to invest in a number of important programs addressing this diversity. We produce, for example, a seniors' guide to programs and services in 16 languages. We deliver information fairs in northern and remote communities to reach our francophone and aboriginal seniors. We fund the seniors' infoline in 30 languages—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of hosting the minister in Davenport for an event which truly highlights our government's continued commitment to serving the needs of seniors in my community and celebrating their diversity. On this occasion, seniors from the Vietnamese Association, Toronto, joined us for an impressive tai chi demonstration. With funding provided by seniors community grants, seniors learned tai chi exercises and in turn became volunteers, teaching other seniors their skills.

Another great example from my riding of an organization that was financed through the grant program was a symposium for immigrant senior women. This educational symposium brought together senior women of diverse backgrounds to participate in workshops and obtain essential resource information.

It's clear these investments have been extremely well received in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide further information on how we're supporting these seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the member again for the question.

Let me say that the priorities of the Seniors Community Grant Program include a focus on aboriginal communities and projects embracing our cultural diversity.

Speaker, back in 2010, when we introduced and passed the Retirement Homes Act, we ensured that important provisions were put in place to protect diversity. It is now a requirement by law that retirement homes, all 700 of them, must prominently display a bill of rights which entitles the residents to have their lifestyles and choices respected, and to freely pursue their social, cultural, religious, spiritual and other interests.

We launched the groundbreaking multicultural Finding Your Way program for people with dementia, and we do that in 12 languages. On top of that, we have a very successful and helpful guide which provides seniors with information on active living, transportation and housing.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, on Monday you

told this House that there would be more family physicians and specialists practising in the province. Contrary to this, the Ontario Medical Association, the people who represent Ontario's doctors, released a statement saying that your government's imposed cuts will drive new physicians out of Ontario and hurt patient care. How can you stand in this House and say there will be increases when the opposite is true? Are you calling Ontario's doctors liars?

1110

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Being a member of the OMA myself, I would certainly not do that. I hold the OMA and our physicians, the more than 30,000 physicians around this province, in extremely high regard. But what I will say to the member opposite is that the OMA negotiations were about one thing and one thing only: They were about physician remuneration. They were about the amount of dollars that physicians in this province earn. Historically, and certainly in the current situation, doctors in this province—as they should be—are among the highest-paid in this country, Mr. Speaker. They're also among the highest-talented in this country, and in North America. But this is not about care to patients. This has nothing to do with access to health care for individual Ontarians. Unfortunately, despite our umpire, retired Justice Warren Winkler, asking the OMA to accept our offer, the OMA did not. Unfortunately, we've had to move ahead without them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, in the South West LHIN, there are over 38,000 people without a family physician. These imposed cuts on these doctors are not going to help that situation one bit whatsoever. Minister, you have failed to define what a high-needs area is and, by doing so, these new doctors will not be able to practise in a family health team throughout southwestern Ontario.

You've told this House, "Doctors are entitled to practise wherever they want in this province." However, again, the OMA has said that your government has limited new graduates from practising in family health teams. Medical students are trained to work in team-based family practice models. Why won't your government work with the front-line health care workers to find solutions to protect Ontario's health care system? Why do you find this so difficult?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, many parts of southwestern Ontario will benefit from the changes that we're making, because we are continuing our commitment to create new family health team positions and family health team entities in those parts of the province that require them. For example, in the northern part of this province, there are roughly 40 family health teams there currently. I'd like to see more of them. In the small towns and rural parts of this province, where there are, I think, about 70 or 80 family health teams currently operating, I'd like to see more, as well. We're continuing to allocate positions to those parts of the province. We're going to be able to define exactly what parts of the province we're talking about within the next several weeks.

But, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we've added 5,000 physicians to this province's health care services in the past decade. We're continuing to add more. We're providing opportunity, and those family doctors can and will practise in whatever part of the province they choose to.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. Thousands of persons with disabilities are proud to be part of the workforce, but they count on a \$100 top-up each month to help pay for the costs of that work. Now the same Premier who promised to protect social assistance is cutting this crucial funding. She promised one thing and she's doing the exact opposite, and 34,000 ODSP recipients are at risk of suffering a huge cut this October. Speaker, I want to give the Premier a chance to fix this mistake. Will she abandon her plan to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit, or will she steamroll ahead with the cuts to social assistance?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, the work of my ministry is to look after those most vulnerable in our society, both those on OW and those on ODSP, and we really are looking very carefully at ways that we can assist this population. We are looking at ways to improve employment opportunities for those with disabilities, and we've introduced a number of measures to encourage those who are able to, in fact, seek employment.

As I think everyone in this House knows, we've put an earnings exemption in now, so that the first \$200 worth of employment income—those individuals do keep that. Over and above the \$200 they earn, 50% is kept in their hands. We are very conscious of doing everything we can to encourage these individuals to be part of our society and take part in every aspect.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Premier: I understand what those changes are supposed to do, but it's actually going to work in the negative if you don't do something to fix it. The Liberals are ignoring the real problems of some of our most vulnerable people. Cutting the Work-Related Benefit means no bus tickets to get to work. It means cutting back on food. It means scrambling to get another shift or being forced out of the workforce altogether.

There is nothing more cynical than a poverty reduction strategy based on cutting \$100 per month from social assistance. Speaker, what will it take for the Premier to stop these cuts to social assistance?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I think, as the member knows, we are looking to streamline various employment benefits for those with disabilities so that, in fact, we will be creating a far more flexible benefit so that those individuals who do require some assistance in terms of obtaining additional training or other skills that they may need in order to enter the labour market will be able to do so and, in fact, will see increased amounts and increased funding for those purposes.

The specific area of the Work-Related Benefit has been put on hold as of this date, as the member mentioned. We continue to ensure, as we move on with social assistance reform, that we look at all opportunities to protect and encourage those Ontarians to take their full place and be included in our society.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Good morning, Speaker. My question, through you to the minister responsible for women's issues: We recently began public hearings for the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. Committee work has been progressing very well in examining sexual violence and harassment in the workplace and beyond. It is an example of positive, non-partisan collaboration that we can have if we work together as parties.

It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment helps to contextualize the work that the committee is doing. I know the purpose of the plan is to engage everyone in communities, classrooms and workplaces across Ontario in the conversation about how to stop sexual violence and harassment.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you say that we have begun to see an impact?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Barrie for asking this very pertinent and timely question. Indeed, our approach is having an impact. Our government's ads that have been out there in the public domain have been viewed by more than seven million people. On the Ontario government's YouTube page alone, over one million views. It has become a viral sensation around the world, with 2.5 million Facebook views in Turkey, where local activists added Turkish subtitles, and it has been viewed 1.7 million times in Brazil.

Given the number of people around the world who have seen this ad in English and French and international translations we have posted, we know it is resonating. Other nations where the ad has been widely seen on YouTube include the United States, the Philippines, India and France. By having this discussion as a society, we can do a much better job of increasing awareness and having an open discussion about sexual violence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My next question also is for the minister responsible for women's issues. It is wonderful that the campaign is beginning to resonate so much in just the first few weeks of its launch. It makes me very proud to be a member of this government to see such wide interest receptivity to our ad, not just in Ontario or Canada, but internationally as well. It seems like a step in the right direction towards changing attitudes and creating more public awareness of this issue.

I understand, as part of the work on the action plan, that you are convening a multi-sector round table through the Ontario Women's Directorate on this issue. How will

the round table help to improve the experiences of survivors who come forward about abuse and make workplaces and campuses safer and more responsive to complaints about sexual violence and harassment? Through you, Speaker, to the minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The permanent round table on sexual violence and harassment is a forum of experts that will advise government on our initiatives and all the issues and opportunities around sexual violence and harassment.

There are many diverse voices around that table, Speaker. We have representatives that have significant front-line support who work with different communities. The round table includes experts on issues affecting specific populations as well, such as aboriginal persons, francophones, LGBT, newcomers, persons with disabilities, youth, older women as well as boys and men. It also has experts who can speak to violence and harassment in the workplace, and at our colleges and universities, which is a big issue right now, Speaker.

I am very pleased that the select committee is moving ahead, and the round table will be kept informed of the work of the committee and coordinate the efforts.

1120

PESTICIDES

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Minister, on March 23 you released a draft regulation for an 80% neonic ban on Ontario's corn and soybean acreage. This is exactly what you proposed before Christmas, and, in spite of feedback—no change. Also on March 23, the USDA released its study concluding neonics are not driving bee deaths. The evidence for your ban is at best circumstantial and has not been proven in controlled scientific studies—certainly not from Health Canada's pest management agency, where the true expertise lies. Your approach is derived from ideology. It's irresponsible. It's intimidating.

Minister, why did you allow emotion to trump science?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question from the honourable gentleman from Haldimand-Norfolk. We do know that a healthy pollinator strategy is very important to the agricultural community in the province of Ontario. We do know that there's a number of contributing factors to bee health. We've gone through two very severe winters in the province of Ontario. We do know that there's a mite, the Varroa mite, that can impact the health of beehives. We do know that appropriate management of beehives in the province of Ontario is very important, and we do know that the use of some pesticides is a contributing factor to bee health. Indeed, working with my colleague, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, we listened—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —we listened, we had public consultations right across the province of Ontario, we had

consultations through the EBR; we have taken all that information into consideration and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary, please?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, we do know the crucial role of pollinators, and I have on my desk the Ontario Pollinator Health Blueprint; you would as well. It comes from a task force of certified crop advisers, ag retailers, the seed trade, farmers, beekeepers, with recommendations for increased communication between farmers and beekeepers; work on bee nutrition and habitat; and manageable and reasonable limits on insecticide use.

You asked for feedback, as you said. You asked the cash crop and the beekeeper community to meet you halfway. They have, and yet, despite all of this, you're adamant on your neonic ban.

Minister, your proposed regs, in my view, are anti-agriculture. You're supposed to be the minister for agriculture, to represent farmers. You're at the table in cabinet. Why will you not speak up for farmers?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, since I'm in a very—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You don't start until I acknowledge—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Sorry, I'm just so anxious.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I know. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, Mr. Speaker, I heard the supplementary from my good friend the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

So let's look at the facts. The agriculture sector of the province of Ontario: \$34 billion in GDP; employs 760,000 Ontarians each and every day; represents 23%—23% of our manufacturing sector in Ontario is in the agri-food sector.

You know, I spend my time on the back concessions in Ontario and at kitchen tables. I know, this government knows, that the agri-food sector has a tremendous potential for growth, not the negativity shown by the official opposition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

LGBT CONVERSION THERAPY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. There are currently doctors practising in Ontario, paid by OHIP, who believe that being gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans is a form of mental illness. Instead of offering support to LGBTQ kids, these doctors tell them that they are broken and need to be fixed. Instead of helping, they use abusive conversion therapies that try to turn these kids straight.

I recently introduced a bill that would prevent Ontario's doctors from abusing LGBTQ kids with such so-

called therapies. California and New Jersey have already passed similar laws.

Premier, I ask, on behalf of survivors like Erika Muse, and the victims who did not survive, like Leelah Alcorn: Will you ban conversion therapy for LGBTQ children?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I too want to applaud the member opposite. I think this is a very important issue. I personally find this type of alleged treatment abhorrent.

Interjection: Alleged?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Alleged in the eyes of those who actually perpetrate this misconduct. This isn't treatment. Our Ontario Human Rights Code is very specific on issues such as this.

I welcome the private member's bill from the member opposite, and I look forward to working with her. I know it's going to be debated this afternoon.

I want to emphasize that no current medical guidelines anywhere that I've found, certainly not in this province, support or endorse this kind of alleged treatment that would aim to change or convert someone away from being LGBT.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Premier: The health minister recently denied that OHIP was paying for conversion therapy for LGBT kids. The fact is, there are doctors, including very influential doctors, who are still trying to "fix" LGBTQ kids with abusive so-called conversion therapies. These doctors can and do bill OHIP for these abusive counselling sessions.

Just last week, as a result of my bill and the hard work of LGBTQ activists, CAMH launched a complete review of their treatment of trans youth, treatment the minister has denied is even happening.

Again, to the Premier: Do you agree that such conversion therapy for LGBTQ children should be banned in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I take great offence to the accusation that I have somehow, at any point in time, said that this treatment isn't occurring or doesn't exist.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's on the public record.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I challenge you to find that public record, but Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock, please.

We'd best do our debating through the Chair. That way, we don't change the debate tenure.

I would ask the minister to address me, and keep the heckling to a minimum.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite does know that there is no billing code in the schedule of benefits for OHIP for conversion therapy or anything like it.

As well, I will be asking the relevant colleges, because there are a number that potentially could be involved in

addressing this important situation, to explore amending the regulations to ban this practice, as it should be banned.

I believe if a particular incident were to be brought forward—I would encourage anyone who is aware of such alleged treatments taking place anywhere in this province to go forward to the appropriate regulatory body. I'm asking them to review their regulations, and certainly this is not something this government would ever support or endorse.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do I have to go to members?

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the investments our government has made to take a dirty and unreliable electricity system and make it clean and reliable have been putting cost pressures on Ontario families.

For many low-income Ontarians, paying their monthly electricity bill is a challenge. I have heard this from some constituents in my riding of Kitchener Centre. In comparison to other residential users in the province, low-income Ontarians spend a disproportionately higher percentage of their income on paying the monthly power bill.

While we recognize that our government is working hard to keep electricity affordable for all Ontarians, could the minister please tell this House what our government is doing to help low-income households with their electricity bills?

1130

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Firstly, thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for the question.

The issue of helping low-income Ontarians with the cost of their electricity bill is one that we have been working hard to alleviate for some time now. While there are already emergency assistance programs and conservation programs in place to reduce electricity costs for Ontarians, we recognize the need to establish an ongoing support program for those most in need.

Just this morning, with members of the Low-Income Energy Network, I announced that our government is taking action to make electricity more affordable for Ontarians through the proposed implementation of the Ontario Electricity Support Program. The program would provide ongoing assistance directly on the bills of eligible low-income electricity consumers starting January 1, 2016. I want to thank the members from the network for their collaboration with the Ontario Energy Board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Minister, for informing us about this proposed rollout of the Ontario Electricity Support Program. It is encouraging to hear that this program would provide targeted help to those who need it the most, making sure that all Ontarians, especially low-income Ontarians, have continued access to clean and reliable electricity.

The proposed creation of this Ontario Electricity Support Program would also support the government's commitment to reducing poverty in Ontario, given that energy costs are a significant part of housing costs for many households. As the rollout of this program coincides with the end of the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, could the minister give us some more details on how the Ontario Electricity Support Program is going to help low-income Ontarians, how much financial assistance it will provide, and if there are other programs that they might qualify for?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the program would provide targeted support. It would be based on a sliding scale that provides support based on a household's income and size. The OESP would work together with the Ontario government's decision to remove the debt retirement charge from all residential consumers' bills at the end of this year. For example, for a family of four with an annual income of less than \$28,000, the combined savings from the OESP and the removal of the debt retirement charge will be about \$525 annually.

There are also existing programs available to help Ontarians with their electricity costs. These include the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit and the saveONenergy Home Assistance program. Ontario is committed to assisting those people most in need.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, over the past several months, Ornge air ambulance has refused calls to land at helipads at night in Parry Sound district.

In August 2014, a 16-year-old girl was seriously injured in an ATV accident just seven minutes from the Ardbeg helipad. Despite solar lights having been installed, fine flying weather and a letter from Ornge saying that night restrictions had been lifted, Ornge refused to land. They instead landed at the Parry Sound hospital, a 45-minute land ambulance drive one way.

Local first responders have no certainty if an Ornge helicopter will land when needed. As minister, what can you do to provide some certainty as to the availability of air ambulance services in Parry Sound district and across the north?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the member opposite bringing this issue to our attention. It is an issue that I'm aware of. I have asked my officials to look into the particular circumstances surrounding this.

The member opposite has commented somewhat on the sorts of parameters that we need to look at, but there are many conditions that determine whether or not an air ambulance, an Ornge helicopter or a fixed-wing aircraft, can or cannot land at a particular locality. They obviously make every effort, subject to the safety of the individuals who are piloting or are on that craft itself, to ensure they can provide the highest quality of care on an urgent basis to those who need it.

Again, I've already asked my officials, with Ornge, to look at the details of this and how we might, on a go-forward basis, provide a higher level of certainty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad you recognize there is a problem and that you understand that in an emergency, time is of the essence. Local first responders and municipal officials have tried to get answers from Ornge and have been in contact with your office.

I've spoken with the mayor of Whitestone, Chris Armstrong, and with the fire chief, Bob Whitman. They feel like they're getting the runaround from Ornge. They say that air ambulance is a vital link, that the current situation is not an acceptable situation. It's not just Ardbeg. Ornge won't land at night at the South River or Britt helipads, and many across the north as well.

Minister, when can the people of Parry Sound district expect to get certainty on whether Ornge will land at their helipads before tragedy happens?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I've committed to following up on this, as I already am, in fact, through our officials and with Ornge. I have no doubt that the member opposite appreciates as well that it's not just the safety and well-being for the patient or the potential patient, but it's also the safety and well-being of the pilots, the paramedics, those who are on these craft doing this important service every single day.

We make every effort, and I know Ornge does as well, to provide the highest quality of service. In fact, 90% of patient transports from emergency scenes were actually confirmed within 10 minutes. They do remarkable work every day around this province. There are specific circumstances that may lead to a positive or negative decision in terms of their ability to land at a specific location. As I mentioned to the member opposite, I'm looking into this specific case.

NATURAL GAS EXTRACTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last year an EKOS poll revealed that 75% of Ontarians support a ban on hydraulic fracturing, otherwise known as fracking. Yesterday, I tabled a bill that would do just that. The bill follows the lead of other jurisdictions like New York, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

The Minister of the Environment expressed an interest in meeting with me about the bill, but then the Minister of Natural Resources said that this bill was not on—the government wouldn't support it. Why was the Minister of

the Environment left out of the loop when this government decided not to support a ban on fracking?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for the question, and I appreciate his private member's bill. I think it's an issue with serious potential consequences and it has merit. I thank him for putting it forward.

You asked, I understand, as you've just said, the Minister of the Environment for a meeting on this. You didn't ask the minister responsible for the legislation for a meeting on this. Had you done that, I would have been more than happy to accommodate the request.

Speaker, as I said in the Legislature, I think before Christmas, maybe back at the beginning of December—I thought I was pretty clear. There was a question from the member from Windsor—Tecumseh on the issue about fracking back in December or earlier than that. I'm sure you've had an opportunity to talk to him. I think at that point I was pretty clear in terms of our position on it, and that is that it would have required legislative change before we would have gone forward with anything in this particular regard. That's on the record.

I'm surprised you didn't have an opportunity to check with the minister responsible for the legislation, but I'm still happy to do that and happy and thankful that the member has brought forward an issue that I think is very serious, and one we need to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Premier: While no fracking is taking place at the moment in Ontario, several energy firms have previously bought land rights in southwestern Ontario and have expressed interest in shale gas fracking. In 2012, the Environmental Commissioner warned that fracking was essentially unregulated in Ontario, and without rules, Ontario's water supply would be at grave risk.

Despite the lack of environmental regulations, the government has rushed ahead to declare that a ban is unnecessary—no debate. It makes no sense for the government to impose a ban simply on the grounds that fracking is not happening at the moment. After all, coal-fired electricity plants are not in operation at the moment, but that has not stopped the government from tabling a bill to ban them.

Will the government take the issue of fracking seriously and formally ban the practice?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for the question, and I guess his private member's bill—I haven't seen it yet; I haven't read it. But the Legislative Assembly will determine how his particular bill is dealt with in due course.

Speaker, as he mentioned in his opening comments, fracking is not occurring anywhere in the province of Ontario right now, and it does, should it be requested, require a licence from my particular ministry under the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act.

Listen: I want to stress that protecting our environment and water is a top priority for our government. I thought I

spoke pretty clearly to this issue many months ago. I welcome the legislation. I look forward to the debate. We'll see how the Legislative Assembly deals with the member's particular private member's bill.

No fracking is occurring now; no applications are in front of me for a decision at this time. A legislative change would be required before we would consider moving forward with fracking in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: After question period, in room 213, the White Ribbon Campaign is holding a pre-launch photo shoot for its upcoming public education campaign called "I'm a Male Model" that seeks to recognize men from all walks of life who are positive role models for men and boys. I want to welcome all MPPs to join, especially our male MPPs. You are fantastic role models and I'd love to have your participation in this campaign. Come by and have your photo taken in one of the T-shirts called "I'm a Male Model" and it will go on the campaign website, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's actually not a point of order but I am assuming that every single man in this room would like to be a male model, so we'll remind everybody about the room.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Please join me in welcoming the Janssen Pharma team. Joining us today are Vice-President Julia Brown, Katherine Law, Charlene Lee, and other members of the government affairs and market access team at Janssen, which is located in the beautiful riding of Don Valley East. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Jim Wilson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to the Legislature, on behalf of page Aiden Campbell from the great riding of Simcoe—Grey, his grandmother Sharon Inkster; grandfather Doug Inkster; and his great uncle Phil Sled. I'll just note that Mr. Sled was the mayor of Severn township for many, many years. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We always love welcoming our guests to the Legislature.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a lot of guests here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin with Alisa Van Der Toorn, who's a teacher and the primary chairperson of Terry Fox Public School; former principal of Terry Fox Public School Ron Lowe; Glemena Bettencourt, who ran with Terry Fox for 21 days and organized the Oak Ridges

Terry Fox run—welcome; Marta Ecsedi; Oakville city councillor Pam Damoff; Chris Henry, a volunteer with the Terry Fox Foundation for 24 years; Paula Trossman, a Terry Fox Team Deloitte leader; Eddie Yu, Terry Fox Team Toronto Go-Getters leader; and Jordan Hill, who is the Terry Fox Toronto Island community run leader.

Also, there's my staff: Blair Ostrom, my legislative assistant; and Kristy May, the intern. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I have two guests here today. My cousins are here to visit me at Queen's Park and see what we do every day. They are also my constituents: Amanjot Gill and Harminder Deol.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize the local efforts to raise awareness on the need for hospital services in Muskoka. This past weekend, over 1,000 people braved the cold to attend rallies in support of continued funding for the two hospital sites overseen by the board of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare.

On March 21, I was pleased to participate in both the Hands Up for Our Hospitals rally in Bracebridge in the morning and the Save Our Services rally in Huntsville in the afternoon. Residents in Muskoka and east Parry Sound are concerned that due to changes in the health care funding model, the current budget shortfall may lead to decreased services at either South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in Bracebridge or Huntsville District Memorial Hospital. The single-siting of emergency services or surgical procedures are two of the biggest fears.

Muskoka is unique. Its large seasonal population and year-round tourism, coupled with the challenges of serving a large geographic area, including east Parry Sound and Algonquin Park, make continued investment in health care services a must. The mayors and councils of Bracebridge and Huntsville, as well as the district of Muskoka council, are all working together and speaking with one voice to maintain sustainable quality health care.

On Monday, as the Legislature resumed, I tabled in this House and presented to the Minister of Health a petition containing thousands of signatures to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the board of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. I will continue to advocate for the continued quality of health care services and would encourage concerned residents to be active participants in the ongoing review process.

BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: I recently met with a delegation from the Ontario Book Publishers Organization, which represents 39 independent, Canadian-owned, Ontario-based publishers.

The Ontario book industry makes a substantial contribution to the province's economy. An estimated 15,000 books are published in Ontario annually. Ontario-based, Canadian-owned book publishers generate more than 2,500 jobs. In 2012, Ontario publishers paid \$256 million in salaries and benefits.

The OPBO wishes to express its appreciation and gratitude for the support it has received and continues to receive. However, more can always be done to ensure the viability of Ontario book publishers.

To that end, Ontario book publishers have requested:

- more support for the use of Canadian resources in Ontario schools. Students should learn about the world around them through Canadian content rather than imported material, thus providing a sense of shared cultures and values;

- the respecting of copyright in our schools to ensure that all parties—content users, Ontario education publishers, and the creators of the content—are treated fairly, and to stem the loss of revenue, leading to cutbacks, layoffs and closures; and

- an expansion of the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit to include the translation of Canadian authors by Canadian translators into French, English or aboriginal languages so as to encourage greater understanding among the language groups.

I am proud that Ontarians maintain a vibrant and independent book industry. We must look to sustain Ontario authors and publishers as a foundational plank for our culture.

PULSEPOINT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me great pleasure today to tell this House about a Canadian first for my great riding of Kingston and the Islands. PulsePoint is the name of a new smartphone app that alerts trained bystanders about a nearby cardiac arrest so that they can help out.

Here's how it works: In the vast majority of cases when there has been a cardiac arrest, someone will call 911. The telephone operator identifies the location and enters that into the computer, as you'd expect. At the same time, however, the computer alerts community members trained to give CPR who have the PulsePoint app on their phone and who are within 500 metres of the emergency. The app shows them a map of how to reach the location and also shows any nearby public-access automated external defibrillators, AEDs.

Sudden cardiac arrest is one of the leading causes of preventable death; there are 40,000 in Canada each year. That's one every 13 minutes.

Calling 911, starting CPR and using an AED doubles someone's chances of survival. There are many, many examples of people whose lives have been saved in this way. Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, this app saves lives.

PulsePoint was launched in Kingston and the Islands on Monday through the collaborative efforts of Queen's University, the city of Kingston, Kingston Fire and

Rescue, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Kingston General Hospital and Bell Canada.

I'm so proud of my community. Kingston and the Islands will be leading the way for the rollout of this app all across the country, saving hundreds of lives each year.

4-H

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my absolute pleasure to stand today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of 4-H in Ontario: 2015 marks 100 years of leadership programs for youth across rural Ontario. We celebrate not just the program itself but also the successes that this program has achieved over the years.

A grassroots organization, 4-H engages youth in their community, environment and society as a whole; 4-H allows for its members to learn about topics, life skills and agriculture through hands-on activities and mentorship. And 4-H is close to my heart. I spoke about having my first calf when I was 11 years of age.

It offers lasting impacts, of which one is here today joining me: The executive director for Farm and Food Care Ontario, Crystal Mackay, is downstairs. I met her through 4-H. It has just inspired so many amazing leaders across our province for the agri-food sector.

None of this, I must say, Speaker, would be possible without the dedicated staff and volunteers of 4-H and the many local associations across this province.

This weekend, I'll be attending the 100th anniversary celebration in Waterloo, where 4-H, incidentally, got its start 100 years ago.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, very good; I almost called you "Daiane"—by your first name.

Yes, 4-H got its start in Waterloo 100 years ago. I would dare say that anyone who has come through this program always contributes their head, heart, health and hands to anything they do.

LONDON YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to say a few words today about an exceptional group of politically engaged young people in London. The London Youth Advisory Council is a group of 14 elected youth councillors between the ages of 15 and 25.

Serving one-year terms, they gain experience in networking, leadership and municipal politics. Furthermore, as councillors, they get to represent other youth across London's 14 wards by working on and speaking on behalf of issues that affect youth in their wards.

Similar to a provincial campaign, these applicants go through three main phases: a candidate application process, campaigning and debating, and then finally an election. Throughout the process, selected candidates are required to partake in training sessions and debates. These sessions help candidates formulate their strategies and platforms, as well as giving them real-world experience in canvassing, door-knocking, speaking with constituents and rallying a support base behind them.

Recently, in fact, the candidates have been selected, and throughout these next few weeks the candidates will be campaigning, debating and reaching out to constituents until the election, which takes place May 3 and runs through May 8.

I look forward to meeting with this group of bright young folks in June to participate as their honorary councillor at one of their round-table discussions. It truly will be an honour to speak with the up-and-coming generation of politicians in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it is so important for brilliant, forward-minded and enthusiastic young people like them to be involved in politics. I'm excited for what the future brings for all of them.

1310

EPILEPSY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: March is Epilepsy Awareness Month. Today is Purple Day, a global day to raise awareness for epilepsy. As a newly minted pediatric nurse years ago, I realized that watching a child having a seizure is pretty scary. Epilepsy is a disorder where seizures can happen suddenly. I was trained to know how to manage a seizure, but lack of awareness and understanding can make it hard and scary for others to know how to respond.

I encourage people to visit the Epilepsy Ontario website to learn how to help someone having a seizure. Raising awareness about epilepsy will help reduce the existing stigma.

There's no cure for epilepsy. However, proper treatment can help control seizures, assisting the person to live their life to the fullest.

I have two close family members with epilepsy, and I know that resources such as the Epilepsy Waterloo-Wellington agency go a long way to supporting families. It has a team of caring volunteers and staff who are dedicated to improving the quality of life for those with epilepsy and their support network through support, education, advocacy and public awareness.

Thanks to Cambridge neurologists Dr. Kathy Giles and Dr. Dwight Stewart, the staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other caring health professionals who provide care in my Cambridge and North Dumfries community, giving hope to those who are living with epilepsy.

KAWARTHA DOWNS

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the member from Peterborough, to make a commitment to Kawartha Downs racetrack and finalize a long-term transfer payment agreement. The track is a vital asset to not just our ridings, but the whole of eastern Ontario.

I was disappointed when the minister did not address my request for a commitment for a long-term deal for Kawartha Downs and instead chose to discuss the steps

the Liberal government took to address the issues in the horse racing industry, which they created when they cancelled the Slots at Racetracks Program. It really is a shame, what they've done to this once world-class industry in Ontario.

Kawartha Downs is the only track in the province without a five-year deal, and year after year it is forced to just hope and wait and see how many race dates it will receive.

Last year, they did the eleventh hour deal, with only 18 racing dates, down from their usual 90-to-100-date season. Despite this setback, Kawartha Downs went on to host a very successful season, with attendance and wagering second only to Woodbine Racetrack in the province. Despite this success, the request for more dates was denied.

They're still waiting to hear from the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on their purse pools. To ensure that they have enough horses to race, you need to have good pools.

For the future of racing, we are down to the wire. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, it is time to give Kawartha Downs hope.

FORT YORK FOOD BANK

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize and celebrate the achievements of the Fort York Food Bank. The Fort York Food Bank is an important community partner that provides much-needed programs and services for the most vulnerable of my riding of Trinity-Spadina.

Recently, the Fort York Food Bank held their third annual Lucky Ball fundraiser, raising approximately \$30,000, and 100% of the donations received went directly to programs and services at the food bank to help the community's hungry and vulnerable.

The Fort York Food Bank originally focused on providing emergency food supplies, but having witnessed a substantial change in the needs of the community, they evolved from a food program into a community organization that provides an integrated set of services. Over the last 10 years, the food bank has served approximately 100,000 meals through their community kitchen, provided more than \$3 million worth of food, and assisted more than 10,000 people through their counselling and advocacy services.

I'm extremely proud of the Fort York Food Bank and the work they do for the vulnerable of our community. I stand today inviting all Ontarians to recognize and celebrate the Fort York Food Bank's recent achievement and to emphasize the importance of supporting your local food bank and the work they do in your community.

CUISINE IN WESTERN MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, with the gradual warming of the weather and people coming out of hibernation, I think what people are really looking for is a good place to

go for a very nice dinner. I just want to invite members and all Ontarians to consider historic downtown Streetsville. In historic downtown Streetsville we've got some of the most wonderful restaurants in northwest Mississauga. Not only that, you're going to get the traditional Streetsville welcome, that western Mississauga welcome, that makes Streetsville such a wonderful place to live, to do business, to raise a family, to start something.

We've got some fantastic new restaurants and, in particular, within the span of about three blocks, we've got three grade A Italian restaurants. You must come out and try Goodfellas, Gabriel's and Mondello, wonderful places to come, and make sure you try Saucy. Our Streetsville cuisine also includes some of the finest of South Asian cuisine. When it comes to going out for dinner, not only in Streetsville but in Meadowvale as well—and in Lisgar, we've got the Lionheart pub with its traditional Irish and English fare.

This is a place to go for people who like to dine out in Mississauga, and I would encourage more people to come out now that the weather is good and to enjoy our cuisine in western Mississauga.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item number 47 and Mr. McNaughton assumes ballot item number 71.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on violence against women from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to recognize the Auditor General and the committee for their work on this important issue and thank all those who took time to present to the committee.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're too late.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader wishes to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Tuesday April 7, 2015, in order to consider Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got to say the first word.

Mr. Naqvi moves that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Tuesday, April 7, 2015—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding this afternoon's business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is looking for unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the member for Toronto—Danforth assume the time remaining in the third party leadoff speech for Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that the member from Toronto—Danforth assume the time remaining in the third party leadoff speech for Bill 9—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a

motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader wishes to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

1320

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot item number 45 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot item number 45 be waived.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not dispensing; I'm done.

Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You wanted to read one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to let you stop me.

It is now time for ministerial statements. The Attorney General.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, 2015 est une année formidable pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes et particulièrement pour les francophones et francophiles, les Premières Nations et la Nation métisse qui célèbrent le 400^e anniversaire de la présence française en Ontario.

Together, we have the honour of witnessing and participating in the progress of la Francophonie in Ontario.

This year, the International Day and Week of la Francophonie take on a new character which calls us to celebrate in style.

En 2015, l'Ontario commémore les explorations de Samuel de Champlain dans les Pays d'en Haut ainsi que son séjour dans ce qu'est maintenant l'Ontario.

Toutefois, la commémoration des 400 ans de présence française est surtout l'occasion d'exprimer notre fierté, celle de constater que la francophonie ontarienne a des racines bien solides depuis quatre siècles, qu'elle est bien ancrée dans le présent et que son avenir est plus prometteur que jamais.

J'en profite pour souligner que la semaine dernière, la communauté francophone a célébré le 18^e anniversaire de SOS Montfort, la mobilisation à l'appui de l'Hôpital Montfort du 22 mars 1997, où plus de 10 000 personnes avaient manifesté au centre municipal d'Ottawa. J'entends toujours l'écho, monsieur le Président : « Montfort fermé—jamais. »

Aujourd'hui, la francophonie ontarienne s'ouvre sur le monde et grandit chaque jour, grâce à sa diversité

culturelle et à l'apport de tous ceux et celles qui l'ont choisi comme terre d'accueil. Cette ouverture a trouvé récemment l'une de ses plus belles expressions au sein de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. En effet, le Canada a maintenant le grand honneur de compter, pour la première fois, l'une des siennes comme secrétaire générale de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative se souviendront sûrement que l'Ontario a ouvertement appuyé la candidature de M^{me} Michaëlle Jean à la direction de l'OIF. La candidature fut couronnée de succès lorsque M^{me} Jean fut désignée secrétaire générale de la Francophonie, l'automne dernier, par la communauté francophone internationale.

The International Organization of la Francophonie is now headed by a great Canadian who also served as chancellor of the University of Ottawa and Governor General of Canada. We should all rejoice in the new direction that Michaëlle Jean wishes to give the international Francophonie.

Permettez-moi de citer le message de M^{me} Jean à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie :

« Ce que nous fêtons...ce n'est pas seulement le partage d'une langue...

« Ce que nous fêtons, ce sont les missions, les valeurs et les revendications dont nous avons investi cette langue, année après année, à travers la Francophonie.

« Ce que nous fêtons, c'est notre obstination à dire NON, en paroles et en actions, à l'inacceptable et à l'intolérable, au nom de la dignité de la personne humaine, de la dignité et de la liberté.

« Ce que nous fêtons, c'est aussi cette conviction que rien ne peut se construire dans la violence, que rien ne peut se construire dans le rejet ou la haine de l'autre, que rien ne peut se construire dans l'indifférence ou l'égoïsme, que rien ne peut se construire sans l'engagement de tous les citoyens et citoyennes, sans l'engagement des entrepreneurs, des créateurs, des organisations de la société civile, sans la participation effective de la jeunesse et de cette moitié de l'humanité que constituent les femmes. »

Mr. Speaker, these values, this vision of la Francophonie that Ms. Jean speaks of, are shared by the government of Ontario and all of our fellow citizens.

La Francophonie means claiming the right to develop one's linguistic, cultural, ethnic or generational identity, with full equality of opportunity and full respect for the rights of all.

C'est pour cette raison que nous demandons, avec votre appui, chers collègues, que le financement et le mandat linguistique de la Société Radio-Canada soient pleinement respectés. Radio-Canada est une institution culturelle essentielle pour les communautés francophones en milieu minoritaire en Ontario et au Canada. Ce diffuseur public a besoin de notre appui afin qu'il puisse continuer à jouer un rôle fondamental dans le renforcement et le développement identitaire.

En Ontario, la francophonie est également un espace idéal pour accueillir les immigrants provenant de tous les pays du monde. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement de

l'Ontario favorise une cible de 5 % de francophones dans sa stratégie en matière d'immigration, et j'en suis très fière. En accueillant ces nouveaux arrivants à bras ouverts, l'Ontario envoie un message clair aux pays et aux gouvernements que la diversité linguistique est un atout pour une société moderne.

Et notre province s'est jointe au grand mouvement des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie en célébrant notre communauté francophone, comme l'ont fait plus de 270 millions de francophones répartis sur cinq continents.

Dear colleagues, Ontarians will celebrate the 400th anniversary of French presence in Ontario throughout the year. During these province-wide celebrations, government initiatives will take place along with cultural projects planned by organizations and community partners.

La Télévision française de l'Ontario diffuse actuellement la superbe série télé Le Rêve de Champlain. Les Jeux panaméricains sont sur le point de débiter. Les organismes communautaires sont à finaliser leurs projets du 400^e anniversaire et les écoles françaises se préparent à mettre en valeur le parcours des francophones de l'Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, on va partager notre belle histoire ici en Ontario, partout au Canada, en France et dans les pays de la Francophonie.

I invite all of you to partake in the 400th-anniversary activities to celebrate this commemorative event, which is a way to promote Ontario as a province that openly welcomes and values the French language and culture.

Together, here at the Legislative Assembly, we have demonstrated unanimity on several occasions on significant issues and challenges for the development of la Francophonie in Ontario, and I thank you very sincerely for your support on behalf of all Canadians.

Je vous invite également à multiplier les efforts pour que l'Ontario maintienne son image de société multiculturelle, tolérante et ouverte sur le monde, un exemple pour l'humanité toute entière.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I should have acknowledged that the Attorney General is also the minister responsible for francophone affairs, so my apologies. Thank you.

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I rise today to support and promote the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards program. Each year in Ontario, more than six million people give their time and skills to improve their communities. That is a lot of generous and kind hearts. The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards celebrate their contribution and their impact on this province.

We are not always aware of the volunteers working around us. They tend to shy away from the spotlight. But they are the ones driving seniors to medical appointments, baking bread at the homeless shelter, translating documents for our newcomers and teaching children the joy of music. They make a lot of things into reality that would not otherwise be possible.

Each year, we travel to communities across the province to give volunteers the thanks they deserve. We began in Guelph last week, and we will conclude in Kingston on June 25. We will visit 39 communities and host 54 ceremonies. Well over 9,000 volunteers will be recognized.

Some have contributed 50, 60 or even more years of service to local organizations. These are incredible numbers. Others are young people just learning the rewards of volunteering.

1330

I know many of my colleagues will celebrate with their constituents at local Volunteer Service Award ceremonies. For those of you who have never attended a ceremony, or have not done so in a little while, I encourage you to do so this year.

Volunteers are truly unsung heroes. They represent active citizenship and what it means to be Ontarians. Let us recognize, celebrate and support our volunteers. Let's continue to nurture the rich tradition of volunteerism in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} Gila Martow: Le 20 mars dernier était une journée très importante pour les Ontariens et Ontariennes. En effet, c'est cette date que, chaque année, nous fêtons la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Cette journée de célébration mondiale fut créée en 1988 comme un moyen pour 70 états et gouvernements de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie de célébrer leur lien commun : la langue française.

Je tiens à rappeler à l'Assemblée que la langue française unit 220 millions de locuteurs dans le monde et rassemble 870 millions de francophones, dont plus de 500 000 ici en Ontario. De plus, les Franco-Ontariens représentent la plus grande communauté francophone au Canada, hors Québec. Le 20 mars dernier était donc l'occasion pour les Franco-Ontariens, les francophones du monde entier et les francophiles de l'Ontario d'exprimer leur solidarité et leur désir de vivre ensemble en partageant l'héritage de la langue de Molière.

Je tiens aussi à rappeler que cette année marquera le 400^e anniversaire de l'établissement des premiers colons français en Ontario. Je compte bien célébrer cet anniversaire important avec les francophones et francophiles de mon comté de Thornhill et de partout à travers l'Ontario.

Permettez-moi aussi de souligner qu'en juillet de cette année, j'aurai l'honneur de participer à la conférence de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, à Berne en Suisse, avec mon collègue parlementaire le député du comté d'Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Finalement, monsieur le Président, je suis bien au fait de la réalité du fait français ici en Ontario, et je tiens à exprimer mon profond désir que la Journée internationale de la Francophonie soit pour nous, Ontariens et

Ontariennes, l'occasion de célébrer cette langue qui fait partie intégrante de notre patrimoine provincial.

Je vous remercie.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to respond to the minister's statement on the Volunteer Service Awards.

When we think of volunteers, we often think of Rotary, Lions, Optimists, Kinsmen, Shriners, agriculture societies, 4-H leaders, churches and schools. Volunteers truly form the bedrock of our communities. They are the lifeblood of literally every town, city, village and rural area of this province.

The men and women who give their time to volunteer in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock do so to improve the lives of their neighbours and make their communities better places for everyone to call home. They give of themselves and they give of their talents. They do so in a way without ever expecting to be rewarded, and certainly many of them without ever expecting to be recognized.

This year, more than 9,000 volunteers will be celebrated at 54 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies across the province between March and June. I'm looking forward to attending the ceremonies in Lindsay, in the county of Peterborough.

The awards recognize individual volunteers for continuous service to an organization for from five to 60 or more years of service. Youth will also be recognized for two or more years of volunteer service.

The Volunteer Service Awards recognize our volunteers for their hard work, but we also, as legislators, can do more by making it easier to allow them to do what they love. That's why I was happy to support the resolution of our leader, Jim Wilson, calling on the government to strike a special committee to investigate the regulatory hurdles facing service clubs in the province. From red tape and rules making it difficult to recruit new members or hold fundraisers, to the increasing taxes and fees they pay, government regulations are jeopardizing the future of many service clubs across Ontario. I was pleased to see that that important resolution got the support of all three parties in this Legislature, and hopefully we'll move this issue forward so that we can get more volunteers to join our many, many associations.

On behalf of, certainly, all the volunteers and residents of my riding, I'd like to say congratulations to all the Volunteer Service Awards recipients. We cannot thank them enough.

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: As the NDP critic for seniors' affairs, as well as the critic for citizenship,

immigration and international trade, I am honoured to rise today to speak about the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. Celebrated since 1986, 2015 marks the 29th anniversary of this time-honoured tradition. Since its inception, it has awarded over 150,000 volunteers in communities across the province. Taking place from March to June, each year these award ceremonies recognize thousands of men, women and youth for their volunteerism.

The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards recognize adults who have given continuous service to an organization. Volunteers are awarded based on service of five years or more. Sometimes seniors have been awarded for more than 60 years of volunteer service.

Recently, I was honoured to meet two exceptional senior volunteers from London-Fanshawe: Bob Shiell; and Bella Leach, whose community dedication I have spoken about in the House before. Bella, in fact, received a Volunteer Service Award in 2014. Bob was recognized for having served in the London East Lions Club for 50 years, and Bella Leach for her 50 years of service to St. Joseph's Health Care in London. Both of these lifelong volunteers are truly inspirational.

I love my critic role, I love seniors, and I love seeing seniors volunteer their time in their retirement to causes they have long been committed to or causes they only now have the time to become involved in. It's a great way for seniors to stay active and engaged as they age. Volunteering can be a source of continuous learning for seniors. They can develop new skills and obtain new knowledge. They can keep their networks active and expand their horizons and gain a real sense of self-fulfillment from donating their time to charity work, church groups, not-for-profits and community centres.

In my community office, I recently met with a steering group for seniors' issues. They are part of a community organization called Northeast Community Conversations, which tries to create dialogue and awareness around social issues affecting all sorts of groups and demographics in the London community. They grow larger each year, and our recent meeting focused on the issues that are important to seniors and the issues that will become more relevant as our population ages. This steering group takes time out of their busy schedules to volunteer for the betterment of seniors in our community. It was a pleasure to meet with them and see their level of dedication to the volunteer work they do.

I'd like to thank Ontario's Volunteer Service Award winners, as well as all the unsung volunteers, for the gift of their time for the betterment of our province's communities.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir d'avoir quelques minutes pour parler de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Comme on le sait tous, la journée, c'était vendredi dernier, le 20 mars. Moi, j'ai certainement profité de l'occasion pour célébrer dans mon comté et cela a été toute une célébration.

Comme tout le monde, on est très fier de savoir que c'est maintenant une Canadienne, M^{me} Michaëlle Jean, qui est la secrétaire générale de l'OIF, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. J'étais surprise et très contente de voir que cette année elle a proclamé l'année sous le thème de « J'ai à cœur ma planète! » pour vraiment essayer de mettre le focus sur l'environnement, sur les changements climatiques. C'était très bien de voir le lancement. Elle l'a fait avec plein de jeunes gens.

Il faut dire que dans la Francophonie on est 870 millions de francophones, mais 245 millions d'eux—donc, quasiment un tiers—sont des jeunes. Ce sont des jeunes francophones pour qui, certainement, la planète et l'environnement sont des mots qui résonnent.

1340

Je ne peux pas m'empêcher d'en parler un peu : moi, j'ai un village très, très francophone dans mon comté qui s'appelle Gogama. Pour eux, certainement, l'environnement est quelque chose qui les rend très, très nerveux ces temps-ci. On va se souvenir que, le 7 mars dernier, un train du CN a déraillé, plusieurs wagons ont explosé, et on parle de plus de 37 wagons contenant du pétrole brut qui ont explosé et brûlé juste à l'orée du village. Donc, quand on parle de la francophonie et de l'environnement, certainement, pour plusieurs membres de mon comté, ça résonne très près du cœur.

J'en profite également, étant donné qu'on est dans la célébration des quatre siècles de la présence française en Ontario, pour encourager tout le monde à syntoniser la Télévision française de l'Ontario, TFO. Ils sont en train de diffuser une série en ce moment qui s'appelle *Le Rêve de Champlain*. Vous pouvez la regarder à la télé, sur vos iPads ou à l'ordinateur. Il y a des petites vignettes avec ça. C'est super bien fait. Je vous garantis que vous allez apprendre quelque chose face à la francophonie en Ontario.

Bonne fête de la Francophonie, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

"Whereas Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

"Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To support Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay."

For obvious reasons, I support this petition and give it to page Jade to take to the table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that contains hundreds of names that were collected by the Ontario Health Coalition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct cuts to care, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services including hospital cleaning, and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including in-patient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care, and the emergency department; and

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services.

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I fully support this petition, Speaker, will affix my name and ask page Alysa to bring it to the Clerk.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

Speaker, I agree with this, affix my signature to it and give it to page Thomas.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from people all across the northeast. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions;

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of the northeast.

This is something we've been waiting for for a long time, Speaker, so I'll give it to Connor to bring to the Clerk.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from our good friends at Mississauga Community Legal Services. It's entitled "Population-based legal services funding," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds ... and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I'm pleased to sign and to support this petition, and to send it down with page Ranen.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of priority funding is causing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site as of May 1st, 2015; and

"Whereas in three years, the 10 beds dedicated to this program have seen over 300 patients utilize the program and at this time there is a waiting list for this successful program; and

"Whereas currently over 83% of patients are discharged from the restorative care program to home after a two- to eight-week program which has prepared them to confidently return home, recognizing this program increases their quality of life through the regaining of strength, balance and independence; and

"Whereas the closure of this program will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits that the restorative care program offers; and

"Whereas the alternative to the restorative care program will see patients staying in active medical beds longer, while they wait for long-term care; and

"Whereas the return of investment on the restorative care program far exceeds conventional approaches when considering the value of quality of life in the patients' own home as compared to a long-term-care facility; and

"Whereas it is our understanding that the CCAC has cut back its services enabling patients to remain confidently in their home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site be recognized for its success; and for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to showcase this program as a model to be followed across the province; and

"That the closing of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site on May 1st, 2015, not proceed and the provincial government support this health care model with base funding as an investment in the health and welfare of patients so they can confidently remain in their home."

I agree with this long petition. I'll affix my name to it and send it to the table with our page Danielle.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Juergen Kirchmann. He lives on Rockwood Avenue North in Thunder Bay. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of

price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Jade to bring it to the Clerk.

1350

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, affix my name, and give it to page Marin to bring forward.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Carbon Tax Petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart

meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

It is signed by hundreds of people from my riding and I will hand it over to page Sarah.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Allen Wood in Peterborough. It goes as follows:

"Five day home care guarantee for seniors.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for" home "care;

"Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

"Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won't require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask Rahul to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is titled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water."

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health

measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the ... recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I will add my name to this and give this to page Thomas.

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

“Whereas Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

“Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To support Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay.”

For obvious reasons, I support this petition and give it to page Ranen, from the beautiful riding of Dufferin–Caledon, to take to the table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

Orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

TERRY FOX DAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE JOUR DE TERRY FOX

Ms. Wong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day / Projet de loi 61, Loi proclamant le Jour de Terry Fox.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak on second reading of my private member’s bill, Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day.

If passed, this bill would proclaim the second Sunday after Labour Day of each year as Terry Fox Day.

To begin our discussion on this bill, I think it is only fitting to start with the story of Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope, a journey that has inspired millions of people to take action in the fight against cancer.

Born in Manitoba and raised in British Columbia, Terry was an active teenager who loved sports. A star athlete in high school, Terry is often remembered as competitive and determined never to let anything hold him back.

Tragically, at the age of 18, he was diagnosed with bone cancer in his right leg. Due to the lack of treatment options available at the time, doctors were forced to amputate his leg six inches above the knee.

Overcome by the suffering he saw in the hospital of other cancer patients, many of whom were young children, Terry decided to take action. He decided that he would run across Canada to raise money for cancer research and awareness. Terry would call his journey the Marathon of Hope. Pledging to raise \$1 million, he began his journey on April 12, 1980, setting out from St. John’s, Newfoundland.

Ontario was the tipping point where Terry’s dedication to find a cure caught on. While he was running through Ontario, word of his journey and enthusiasm spread across the country. He was greeted at every stop by crowds of well-wishers and supporters. It was in this province that Terry’s dream became a national dream. It was here that led to his new goal: to raise \$1 for every Canadian for cancer research.

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When Terry reached Toronto, he was greeted by over 10,000 supporters. I remember back then being part of the crowd—I was in my last year of high school; I took a day off, I think—greeting him at city hall. Thousands of supporters across the city came to join him on University Avenue as well as at city hall, as I said.

On July 10, 1980, Terry arrived in Scarborough, where he was greeted in a welcoming ceremony at Scar-

borough Civic Centre, just outside my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt.

Initially, organizers of the ceremony were worried that no one would be there to welcome him. Well, were they ever wrong. Thousands of Scarborough residents greeted him as he arrived at Albert Campbell Square. People filled the rotunda to hear him speak. When he arrived, Terry was appointed the honorary mayor of Scarborough for the day, and the city made a \$5,000 contribution towards the Marathon of Hope.

As Terry's brother Fred Fox shared with me, it was in Scarborough that Terry gave one of the most passionate speeches of his journey. Terry told thousands of people who came to Scarborough that he did not want to be famous for the run. He said he was just a guy running across the country to collect money for cancer research. He then urged the crowd that if he didn't finish, others needed to continue. "It's got to keep going without me," Terry said.

Terry Fox's journey lasted a total of 143 days and 5,373 kilometres. Unfortunately, Terry's journey came to an end outside of Thunder Bay. Even though Terry's time running was over, he succeeded in creating a lasting legacy that has continued to live on through the annual Terry Fox Run. The first Terry Fox Run was held in his memory in September 1981, one year after his journey ended, on a day chosen by Terry himself before he passed away.

Named one of the greatest Canadians, Terry Fox was not just a guy. Since his journey began in 1980, Terry Fox has been a vital symbol of hope for Canadians. His dedication to devoting his life to finding a cure for cancer through the Marathon of Hope has inspired us all. That is why, every year, on the second Sunday after Labour Day, thousands of Ontarians do their part to ensure that his memory lives on by running or walking in one of the many Terry Fox Runs—or National School Run Days—across this province. In fact, last year, every member in this House had at least one Terry Fox Run take place in their riding. I know that some of you, including our Premier, take part in this annual run each year.

It is clear that Terry Fox's visit to Scarborough has had a lasting impression on my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, and I'm honoured to bring this bill forward on behalf of my constituents.

We are joined in the House today by current and former staff at Terry Fox Public School, an elementary school in my riding. Named in honour of Terry, the school opened in 1981, the same year as the first Terry Fox Run. Since 1984, the school has honoured the memory of Terry and his Marathon of Hope by organizing the annual Terry Fox Run, with all proceeds going to the Terry Fox Foundation. To date, the school has raised \$83,000.

I'd like to thank teacher Alisa Van Der Toorn, who's here with us today, for organizing the annual run and keeping Terry's legacy alive at the school. Thank you, Alisa.

Applause.

Ms. Soo Wong: Speaking with the current and former staff, it is clear that Terry Fox Public School continues to embody the values of Terry Fox, operating under the motto "Living and learning with courage." No more clearly is this illustrated than by one former student who, after beating childhood cancer, continues to come back to the school to share her experience with other students. In doing so, she's raising awareness and reducing the stigma associated with this disease.

I also want to take this time, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the talented teachers and staff who work at Terry Fox Public School—truly living and teaching with courage. One dynamic teacher and vice-principal I would like to recognize is Scott Gardner—and I know he's watching right now—who has influenced the lives of many Terry Fox students academically, athletically and emotionally. In 2009, Scott was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumour. Despite this, he continues to impart his courage, strength of character, perseverance and determination as he battles his illness.

Speaker, I share these stories today because they motivate us to carry on Terry's dream: to find an end to cancer.

Today, Terry Fox's dream to raise money for cancer research and awareness has had a profound effect on millions of lives around the world. When Terry lost his leg to cancer in 1977, he was told that he only had a 50% chance of survival. Now Ontarians with the same cancer have survival rates of nearly 80%, and a similar diagnosis no longer risks the loss of limbs. Such scientific and medical advancements have been made possible by money raised in Terry Fox's name each year.

This September, millions of people around the world will take part in their own Marathons of Hope. The Terry Fox Run has become the world's largest one-day cancer fundraiser. These runs have now contributed to raising over \$650 million for cancer research through the Terry Fox Foundation.

In 2013, the Terry Fox Foundation directed \$23.5 million to cancer research programs. Such funds support hospitals in Toronto like SickKids and Sunnybrook, as well as universities and research institutes across this country, who are working towards early diagnoses, advances in treatment and the eventual cure for cancer.

Some of the achievements as a result of the Terry Fox Run include: early lung cancer diagnosis and detection, better understanding of the genetics behind childhood brain cancer and better management of prostate cancer through the use of biomarkers. It is clear that we have made amazing advancements in cancer detection and treatments since Terry Fox began his Marathon of Hope. But the journey is not over, and I'm sure that everyone here, and those who are watching today, knows somebody whose life has been affected by cancer. We still have many hurdles to face, and we must continue to support the researchers, medical staff, front-line workers, patients and families to beat cancer.

Proclaiming the second Sunday after Labour Day as Terry Fox Day in Ontario not only contributes to the

preservation of Terry's dream to find a cure for cancer, but it will also serve as a yearly reminder that we must spread his message of courage, hope and determination. Proclaiming Terry Fox Day also gives us the opportunity to recognize the important work being done by the Terry Fox Foundation and the hard work and dedication of many of the volunteers who organize and participate in the run each year.

Last year, Terry Fox's home province of British Columbia proclaimed the same day as Terry Fox Day. It is only appropriate that Ontario join BC in recognizing the significance of what Terry Fox tried to accomplish. At each stop he made, his words of courage and hope captured the hearts of so many Ontarians, inspiring them to keep his dream alive.

I would like to thank all our guests who are here today at Queen's Park to hear us speak to the bill and my colleagues in the House for being here to take part in the debate on second reading of Bill 61. I hope I can count on your support, so that we can pass this bill before the House rises for the summer. In doing so, we will honour the 35th anniversary of the Terry Fox Run this September by proclaiming the second Sunday after Labour Day as Terry Fox Day in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to start off by commending my colleague Soo for bringing this bill forward. On behalf of my constituents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I am pleased to rise in the House today and voice our support for the Terry Fox Day Act.

It has been 35 years since I watched Terry run halfway across this vast country on one leg. Terry Fox is my hero. To me, proclaiming Terry Fox Day is important in two ways: so we can keep going with our efforts in out-running cancer, and so we can keep exemplifying Terry and his role in shaping our Canadian identity. The Marathon of Hope ingrained in me the most sincere respect for Terry and everything this young man from Port Coquitlam, B.C., stood for: strength through adversity, being the best person you can be, and never giving up.

To that end, I offer this quote by Terry: "I don't feel that this is unfair. That's the thing about cancer. I'm not the only one, it happens all the time to people. I'm not special. This just intensifies what I did. It gives it more meaning. It'll inspire more people. I just wish people would realize that anything's possible if you try; dreams are made possible if you try."

I am proud that we continue to carry Terry's torch with the Terry Fox Run, and I am proud to say that I started and organized the Warton Terry Fox Run for 10 years with colleagues Marcy McGill, Suzy Richardson, Susan Given, and Cris and Richard Bouillon, and that run still continues today due to the efforts of a lot of those volunteers.

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Today almost every community and a majority of schools celebrate this great Canadian hero by hitting the streets or schoolyards to raise money for cancer research

and to keep Terry's hope alive. In fact, it pleases me to know that people across the world, from students in the United Arab Emirates and Morocco to Singapore and China continue to be inspired by Terry and hold their own Terry Fox Runs in support of cancer research.

I myself am a runner and have always been a strong proponent of engaging people to lead healthier and more active lives. That is why you often hear me advocating in this House for more mandatory daily activities for our children and adults alike. I'm concerned with our obesity numbers and the fact that despite the advice we are getting, some of our kids continue to go without the daily needed physical activity.

As cancer continues to claim the lives of 7.6 million people every year, four million of whom die prematurely, aged between 30 and 69 years, I think it is absolutely important that we do more.

On a personal note, I lost my sister Marj and my late mother, Jean; and my sister Bonnie and sister-in-law Joanne are breast cancer survivors. It's definitely very personal to a lot of us, and something we always have to be cognizant of.

I think that we, as legislators, can facilitate getting more of our young people—all people, in fact—to embrace wellness and fitness, and I think we can be giving them the tools to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Thank you to all of those who have supported Terry's cause. Without you there would be no run, no resources for cancer research and, most importantly, no recognition of people and their families who battle this terrible disease.

Courage, hope and determination are the epitome of Terry Fox. Thank you, Terry Fox. One day we will find a cure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: First, I'd like to welcome the guests here today to listen to the debate.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today on the Terry Fox Day Act. I don't think I need to explain to anyone in this House who Terry Fox was. His compassion, his courage and his inspirational life story have made Terry Fox a household name right across Canada.

Terry was born in Winnipeg on July 28, 1958. It was at the age of 18, as a first-year university student and a very good athlete, when Terry was first diagnosed with bone cancer. That cancer would result in the amputation of his right leg, six inches above the knee. While many others would have seen defeat, Terry saw hope. Inspired by those he witnessed suffering from cancer, children in particular, Terry began his Marathon of Hope in 1980, beginning in St. John's, Newfoundland. Think about this: He ran 26 miles per day, seven days a week with a goal of running across Canada to raise money to fight cancer.

As many of you know, Terry didn't get to see that goal. He was forced to stop his incredible marathon in Thunder Bay, after running 5,373 kilometres in 143 days. He was forced to stop because of a recurrence of cancer that took his life in 1981.

Inspired by his determination and his incredible journey to bring hope to those fighting against cancer, millions of people from across 25 countries run in Terry Fox's name every year and carry on his legacy.

Named as one of the greatest Canadians, his story continues to inspire the world. Every year, I participate in the Terry Fox Run in Niagara Falls. I'm happy to say that there are Terry Fox Runs in almost every community in Niagara.

I'm also proud to say that Terry Fox ran through Niagara Falls during his Marathon of Hope in 1980. At that time, he was greeted by the mayor, Wayne Thomson. It was incredible that there were only 30 to 40 people to greet Terry that day and to see the Falls and go down the parkway. The former mayor, Wayne Thomson, actually continues to represent Niagara Falls as a city councillor today.

As you can imagine, our city is incredibly supportive of the Terry Fox Run. Every year, local MPs, the mayor, his family, city councillors and local high schools all support the run. My daughter, who goes to St. Mike's, is a cheerleader, and they're there, cheering on the runners.

Our city has a proud history of supporting the run. The chair of the first Terry Fox Run committee in 1985 was Dan D'Addio, a man with a big heart who himself has also been recognized by the city of Niagara Falls.

I'd also like to take a moment and recognize Les—I'm going to try to get this name right—Potapczyk, for being the chair of the Terry Fox Run committee in Niagara Falls. Because of his incredible hard work, and the volunteers, the event is an amazing success every year.

It's so great to see our community come together and support such a worthy cause.

Thanks to Terry's work and his incredible life, millions of dollars have been raised to fight cancer. Every year, treatments are advancing, and people who Terry never met get to live full and wonderful lives because of the work he started. Terry Fox makes us all proud to be Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate 35 years of the Marathon of Hope, I encourage everyone to consider participating in this year's Terry Fox Run in their own community. By continuing on Terry's Marathon of Hope, we become an example of all the great things this country stands for: compassion and the ability to work together.

Working together, we can recognize Terry's dream of curing cancer. I think that's all our dream because we've all been touched by cancer in some way or another with our family members. Working together—I like using those words, "working together"—we can make sure that Terry Fox lives on in all of us. We can commemorate a true hero and pay homage to his incredible spirit.

I'm happy to support any motion that gives recognition to Terry Fox. There are very few people who are more deserving. I'd like to commend the member for taking the time to make sure that Terry receives the recognition he deserves. It may not be much, but it is the least we can do for such a great man.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand in this House today and pay tribute to one of this country's greatest heroes, a

man whose story inspires not only us here in Ontario but people from around the world.

I want to finish this by pointing out one fact: When Terry began his Marathon of Hope, he was running to raise one dollar for every Canadian in the name of fighting cancer. At that time, we had 23 million people living in Canada. Though people admired Terry, they thought it couldn't be done. They thought he'd never be able to raise that amount of money in 1980. As this story illustrates, Terry was never afraid of hope. To this day—now think about this—over \$650 million has been raised in Terry's name to fight cancer. That's why I talked about the Niagara Falls story earlier in this: because people didn't realize the courage that had happened in 1980. They didn't realize what was going on but they certainly do today.

I want to finish by saying that although Terry is no longer with us, make no mistake about it, his marathon and his life continue to give us hope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to begin by thanking the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, Soo Wong, for bringing this forward. It's such an incredibly simple, obvious and good idea that I'm a little disappointed I didn't think about it myself, actually, to tell you the truth, Soo. It's obviously a great idea, and I have no doubt this will be roundly supported by all in the House.

Speaker, the word "hero" is a word perhaps that gets used a little bit too loosely in our society today; at least that's something that I've always felt. I try not to assign the term too easily. I have two in my life who I have always thought of and who have inspired me. The first one: I can remember growing up as a young man, being inspired by Martin Luther King and listening to him speak and seeing what he was doing, understanding probably that he was putting his life at risk and on the line for what he was doing. The other hero for me, without a doubt, was Terry Fox. I have two pictures hanging on the wall of my constituency office. One is of Martin Luther King, and the other one is of Terry Fox.

Clearly what this young man at the time has managed to accomplish is quite remarkable, and I think there's nobody who would dispute that in the chamber here today.

I've had the pleasure of being a political representative for going on 19 years now, six on Thunder Bay city council and into my 13th year here in the provincial Legislature. In all of that time, I've had the good fortune to meet a lot of interesting people, like all of us do, but I can tell you, in my going on 19 years, I've asked for the opportunity to have my picture taken only once with somebody. I felt like I was intruding in their space. It was when Terry Fox's parents were in Thunder Bay for the dedication of the monument to mark the end of Terry's run. Rolly and Betty Fox were in Thunder Bay to mark the moving of the monument from one side of the highway to the other—a really incredible monument and a great testament to what Terry did. I would encourage

you, if you're driving through Thunder Bay, to stop and take a look and visit that site.

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They were there for the re-dedication. I can remember going up to them and saying, "Listen, would you mind if I had a photograph taken with you?"—such was the impact of their son on me and many others. It's a photograph that, to this day, I very much cherish.

We think of him and what he has done, obviously, for cancer research—as we've heard, \$650 million and counting—but I can't help but focus at least just a little bit on the fact that this young man ran the equivalent of a marathon a day, for 142 consecutive days, on one leg.

Now, if anybody else—and I heard my colleague across the way say he's a runner, as am I. I've run a handful of marathons. I know what it feels like. I know the training that goes into running one. Terry Fox ran 142 of them, on consecutive days, on one leg. The athletic achievement of what he managed to accomplish just is hard to compare. It may be one of the greatest athletic achievements of all time. We tend not to think about it, necessarily, in that regard.

I think that this idea is so obvious, so good, so strong and so powerful, to continue supporting this young man. We were all drawn in to his aura. I think when we saw him interviewed, he was so humble. He was so easily able to connect with all of us. He had an aura about him, I think, that to this day is perpetuated and is maintained, and it's one of the reasons why his run every September is still so successful.

I participate—not every year, but as many years as I can. I thank my good buddy Donny Morrison, in Thunder Bay, and the Rotarians and all the other volunteers who get together to continue to help to perpetuate Terry's memory through fundraising events like that one—a truly remarkable story, a great Canadian hero, if I could close by saying that. He truly fits the bill. It was a great pleasure for me to meet with his family very briefly.

Again, I want to close by thanking our member for bringing this forward. It's long overdue and an absolutely fantastic idea.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm humbled today to rise to speak to the creation of a day in September to commemorate the memory of Terry Fox. I would be hard-pressed to think of a more deserving Canadian than Terry Fox—his unselfish determination to bring attention to the impact that cancer is having on our society today and the need to make the search for a cure such a public priority.

Let's, for a moment, think of what this young man accomplished. Through his determination, this young man organized a walk across this great country of ours, literally on one leg, getting halfway, to Thunder Bay, before he was stopped by the cancer that eventually took his life.

I'm sure there were many days, especially at the start and through the province of Quebec, when he thought he was wasting the short time that he had left—days of bad

weather, rain and snow, and through a great amount of pain; days where very few people bothered to show up or even acknowledge that the venture was under way. But he endured and never gave up.

This single act of endurance acted like a lightning rod to bring Canadians together to make cancer fundraising and research the number one priority of Canadians over the last 35 years. This research has allowed great strides to be made in the development of the treatment and cures of many of the different types of cancer. In fact, if Terry was alive today, he would likely have survived the cancer that took his life.

But we have so much more to do. Canadians have rallied to continue his fight. I am proud to say that although I haven't participated in every one of the Marathon of Hope events, I have been able to walk, run or bike through most.

Our community, like most communities in our country, continues to host this terrific annual event. Volunteers work hard, spending weeks and months planning and hosting this wonderful event. What results is the world's largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research—raising more than \$650 million to combat this terrible disease.

Everyone knows so many people who have succumbed to cancer. Both my wife and I lost our dads to cancer, watching helplessly as they suffered through their final days. Back then, cancer took no prisoners. Over the years, many people have suffered the same fate with this terrible disease. So many people in our community—I can think of Joan P. MacDonald, Bev Schaefer, Sylvia Thomson, Ray "Gill" McDonell and many others who have left a mark in the community—all left us far too young because of this terrible disease.

But there is good news. Because of the work Terry Fox started, and continued by so many others, many types of cancer are curable today, and many other people are living longer and more comfortably than those who suffered not so long ago.

But there is much more to do. It is our duty to keep Terry's memory alive by continuing the fight he started 35 years ago to find the cure for all these many different types of cancer. I trust this bill will pull all parties together to support this worthwhile endeavour to honour this young Canadian who, through great personal sacrifice, took up the fight against this terrible disease and whose initiative has brought us so far along in this terrible battle.

I thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for bringing this bill up. I trust and hope it has more success than Ted Chudleigh did on this side, who twice put this bill through and never was able to actually see it finally put into law.

I think all members of the House are supporting this bill and would like to see it not only pass today, but move through, so we can finally acknowledge this great Canadian. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill honours Terry Fox, one of our true national heroes. Terry Fox may not have been from Ontario, but he was, without question, a great Canadian.

He was born in Manitoba and grew up in British Columbia. He prepared for his Marathon of Hope by running a marathon in Prince George, BC. His run began in St. John's, Newfoundland, and he ran through Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec before reaching Ontario.

Think about that achievement, Speaker. After battling cancer and losing a leg, Terry Fox had the energy and determination to run long distance in seven of our 10 provinces.

Terry crossed into Ontario at the town of Hawkesbury on the last Saturday in June. He was met by hundreds of residents, a brass band playing and thousands of balloons. The OPP gave him an escort through the province.

It was perfectly timed and fitting that Terry Fox, one of our greatest Canadians, entered Canada's capital city on July 1, 1980. It is now called Canada Day, but back then it was still known as Dominion Day. In Ottawa, he met the Governor General and the Prime Minister. In front of 16,000 fans he performed the ceremonial kickoff at the CFL game between the Ottawa Rough Riders and the Saskatchewan Roughriders. There's another historical fact: Back in the day, we had two CFL teams called the Roughriders.

On July 11, Terry Fox reached Toronto, where he was greeted by a crowd of 10,000 people. On July 14, Terry reached my home city of Hamilton. He spoke in front of an enthralled crowd at the Royal Botanical Gardens. In Hamilton, 1960 Canadian marathon champion Gord Dickson gave Terry his gold medal. Gord Dickson's words were that "the young fellow was running the greatest race of all" time.

Over the next two months, Terry continued his run through our great province of Ontario. He made it just as far as Thunder Bay, where he was forced to halt his run on September 1.

It's fitting that Terry Fox was a sporting star before he became a national hero. When he was growing up, Terry played soccer, rugby and baseball. Initially, he only took up cross-country running to impress his junior high school basketball coach. Even though he wasn't the tallest, his real passion for basketball and his sheer perseverance earned him a starting position on his high school team. In grade 12, he shared his high school athlete of the year award with his best friend.

The ordeal of cancer treatment, chemotherapy and a leg amputation didn't hold this young man back. It fired his determination to succeed, to live his life as he wished and to help others find courage to fight this terrible disease.

He won three national titles in wheelchair basketball and he was named an all-star by the North American Wheelchair Basketball Association—quite a feat.

The story of Terry Fox has been a source of inspiration to those battling cancer for 35 years now. It's

incredible to think how time has flown. Most Ontarians weren't even born when Terry was making his monumental run, but the memory and inspiration of Terry Fox lives on among our young people. They don't need to see him on live TV or read about him in the daily newspapers to be inspired by his story and his message. Each September, schools throughout Canada organize their own Terry Fox Runs in support of cancer research. This year, Terry Fox National School Run Day will be held on September 30. This bill before us proclaims the second Sunday after Labour Day in each year to be Terry Fox Day. I can think of no more perfect day, as that is the day each year on which tens of thousands of Ontarians and Canadians take part in the annual Terry Fox Run.

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The Terry Fox Run is the largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research, not only in Canada, but the world. Over \$650 million has been raised worldwide for cancer research in Terry's name. Speaker, that's incredible: a solid, concrete achievement by this young man. We should recognize that it's an achievement shared by all those who take part in the Terry Fox Run and help organize it. We can only estimate how many lives have been saved by this research and because of the flame that Terry lit. He shone light on the poor state of cancer research funding at the time, and he was an inspiration to millions.

Terry Fox has been honoured in cities, towns and villages across Canada. There are 14 schools and 15 roads in Canada named after Terry. He was the youngest person ever named as a Companion of the Order of Canada. Back in 2004, the CBC produced a television series and held public votes to determine who were the greatest Canadians. At the top of that list, who did we find? Tommy Douglas and Terry Fox: two true heroes of Canada who, in very different ways, contributed so much to the health care of Canadians.

Canadians truly value their health, and it shows. British Columbia has recently enacted a law proclaiming the second Sunday after Labour Day in each year to be Terry Fox Day. Their first Terry Fox Day will be held this September, and in fact, if we can quickly manage to get this bill through reading and royal assent, Ontario can match BC in having its first Terry Fox Day this September too.

I support this bill, and I hope it has better sailing than the average private member's bill does. Let's get this bill passed so that Ontario will have a Terry Fox Day in September. Let's not allow BC to have the only gold medal; we want a share in that gold medal.

I also, in closing, would like to congratulate the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for this fine endeavour. We certainly are 100% behind you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Cambridge in support of Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day. In my wholehearted support, I would like to share some of my experiences with this young man.

When Terry Fox ended his Marathon of Hope outside Thunder Bay in 1980, I was working as a pediatric nurse just down the street here at SickKids in Toronto. Terry's courageous journey touched us all. It was particularly meaningful to many of us working in pediatric oncology at SickKids at the time. We were surrounded each day by children and young adults engaged in their own difficult, and sometimes unsuccessful, battles with cancer.

Children and their parents were glued to the television set, not only watching Terry run a marathon every day, but running a marathon on a right-leg prosthesis. It was incredible. They watched him struggle and persevere in order to raise awareness and to raise funds in support of cancer research. These patients and their parents told me about how inspired they were in their own struggles—their own journeys—by Terry's Marathon of Hope. His run was about raising money, but for these folks it was also about the strength and the courage to fight, despite incredibly difficult circumstances. Terry helped patients all over Canada and all over the world to find the strength within themselves to fight on.

Terry's run brought to the forefront of people's minds the terrible impacts of cancer. It caused all of us to stand up and take notice, and motivated us to work for change. We were inspired by the Marathon of Hope, not only as Canadians, but people all over the world as well.

I was speaking to my intern Clare about Terry's legacy the other day and she told me about her experiences moving from British Columbia, Terry's home, to Hong Kong as a young child. She was nervous to move to an unfamiliar city, but arriving in the fall, she was surprised to find she could participate in a Terry Fox Run in her new city. This demonstrates how universal the story and spirit of Terry Fox is. We can participate here in Canada or halfway around the world, but the message remains the same: We must work to support the research that continues to find cures and treatments for cancer.

Many of the children who I met in the pediatric oncology unit at SickKids were suffering from leukemia. Leukemia disproportionately affects children and accounts for one third of childhood cancers. Most of the children had ALL, acute lymphoblastic leukemia, which makes up about 80% of all cases of leukemia.

In the 35 years since Terry's run, the survival rate for ALL has risen steadily and is now around 85%. Children with ALL are now much more likely to live long and happy lives, and the \$650 million raised by Terry Fox Runs across the world has been instrumental in funding the research that has gotten us to this point.

There are two annual runs in my riding, one in Ayr and one in Cambridge. Members of our community come together to walk, jog and run with their families and friends to remember Terry and to raise money. I'm proud to participate each year, and to contribute to a global movement that has meant so much to so many.

Again, I am honoured to rise today to speak in support of this bill to institute a day to officially honour Terry Fox. We Ontarians can take this day each year to look back on what Terry Fox has meant to us.

Congratulations to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for bringing this worthy bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm proud to speak to Bill 61, the Terry Fox Day Act, and to commend the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for bringing this bill forward again, and to also welcome the Terry Fox guests we have in the gallery with us.

Thirty-five years ago, on April 12, Terry Fox began what was to be known as the Marathon of Hope. Terry, who lost his leg in 1977 as a result of bone cancer, wanted to run across Canada and raise money for cancer research and awareness. After a fairly quiet beginning in St. John's, Newfoundland, the Marathon of Hope quickly gained momentum, and Terry Fox became a household hero and star as he worked his way across our country over the next four and a half months.

His fierce determination and remarkable personal courage captured the hearts of Canadians and raised awareness of the need to find a cure for cancer. As has been said here in the Legislature today, he ran 40 kilometres every day for 143 days before his disease forced him to stop halfway across the country. It came to an end on September 1 of that year in Thunder Bay, when they discovered that the cancer had returned to his body, and he died the following June 28.

But since that day, a remarkable \$650 million has been raised in his name worldwide through the Terry Fox Foundation, and he truly inspired many Canadians to carry on where he left off. Now, over 800 communities across Canada have Terry Fox Runs one Sunday each year in September, when participants walk, jog and bike in memory of Terry Fox, and run his historic Marathon of Hope. I believe it is the world's largest one-day fundraiser for cancer research.

Certainly in my riding, the Terry Fox Run is held in communities including Beaverton, Bobcaygeon, Haliburton, Lindsay and Minden, and I usually participate in one of them. There are thousands of volunteers, like Diane Peacock, the chair of the Minden Terry Fox Run, who emailed me right away to say, "Terry Fox Day: We need it." I knew that the member for Scarborough—Agincourt was already on it, and I said, "We are going to be debating it." I asked Diane to come down today—she couldn't make it—but I'm sure she's already planning next year's Terry Fox Run.

I just want to say to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt: Well done. Let's get it through, and let's get it proclaimed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's great to be able to rise in the House today. I think the member from Scarborough—Agincourt has given us all an incredible opportunity here today to do something that, in hindsight, probably should have been done a long time ago.

I really want to applaud the initiative of the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for grabbing this one,

taking it by the bit and bringing it into the House, so that we're able to do this, because I think that in so many communities—internationally, across our country and across Ontario—Terry Fox has been a symbol of hope. He has been something we all aspire to as individuals, and certainly, for those who are suffering with the challenges of cancer, he has done something that simply nobody else in the world has been able to do.

1440

He's impacted other people in a variety of ways. I want to tell you about somebody who lives in Oakville. Her name is Lisa Moody. She was 13 years old when she drew inspiration from Terry Fox. She joined her first run in a wheelchair. She's done every single run since, for the past 25 years, and now she participates with her own daughter in the annual walk we have in Coronation Park in Oakville.

There was a gentleman named Darrell Atherley. He was a power walker. He participated in more than 25 races and events before bladder cancer took his life. Atherley founded Team Darrell, and his family has continued the tradition since then. They have raised about \$130,000 over about a five-year period.

Every year the Oakville community really comes out for the Terry Fox Run and two individuals have made that possible. I know that this takes place in a number of other communities across the country and throughout the world, but there are two individuals in particular who worked tirelessly to make this really the number one event in my community of Oakville.

The first is Ralph Robinson, the ward 1 councillor in Oakville. He started the Terry Fox Run in Oakville and he organized the event himself for 25 years. There's a quote from Darrell Fox about Ralph. He says, "I have had the opportunity and the pleasure to meet Ralph on numerous occasions over the 25 years he has been the Terry Fox Run organizer in Oakville. He has served Terry and his dream of eradicating cancer...."

Today we're joined in the members' gallery by my friend and colleague, Pam Damoff, the Ward 2 councillor in Oakville. She took on the role of event organizer and she's been breaking records with the participation and the funds that are raised every year. Last year's run was a record in the relatively small community of Oakville. We, alone, raised \$125,000 in one, single run. I'm really happy that Pam's able to be here today to watch this debate because I know how much it means to her. She's taken the run in Oakville and made it an even bigger event. She plans a kickoff breakfast every year; this year it's April 17. She's going to be seeking support from her own colleagues on Oakville council for a Terry Fox Day in her own community.

Today we have been able to move ahead so far in cancer research. I think other people have spoken about the progress we've made.

I would note also that the Thunder Bay monument that was spoken about so eloquently by the Minister of Natural Resources, the member for Thunder Bay—there's an Oakville connection there as well. That monu-

ment was sculpted by Manfred, who is an artist in Oakville.

I'm so pleased to see this before us today. The tone of the debate today has been spectacular. As I said, it gives us in the House an opportunity to do something together to honour this great man, Terry Fox.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I just want, in the short time left, to talk about the other monument at the other end: Mile Zero in St. John's, Newfoundland. A number of years ago when my family went, it was one of the first places that we had to find.

In the debate today we talk a lot about Terry Fox's passion and his vision, but I want, particularly, the pages to understand that when he began that run in St. John's, Newfoundland, he was 22 years old. At that moment he said that if his Marathon of Hope could raise \$1 from every Canadian, he would be so pleased. That was his goal at 22 years old: \$24 million. Of course now we talk about how annually that same Marathon of Hope is raising \$30 million a year across the world. If that isn't an example of passion and vision and someone who we should be honouring with the Terry Fox Day then I don't know who else we would choose. The young man—he was a man but he was a young man—had already had so many obstacles put in his place and yet at 22 years old he said, "My goal is to raise \$24 million for cancer research; \$1 for every Canadian." Has he not achieved that in spades?

Well done to you, Soo—sorry, Scarborough—Agin-court, for bringing forward this great initiative. I hope we can see it come to fruition because he really has empowered and made people passionate that they really can deal with this dastardly thing that we call cancer. At a time when people thought there was no hope if your physician told you you had cancer, he gave us that hope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to thank all of you for your comments.

I'll now return to the member for Scarborough—Agin-court. You have two minutes.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased that the members from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Niagara Falls, Cambridge, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Dufferin—Caledon, and the Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Labour were speaking in support of my proposed Bill 61. Let me close the remarks today in honour of Terry, but also remind each one of us of his message in Scarborough, when he said that if he cannot continue, we've got to keep going: "It's got to keep going without me."

Through recognition through this great province called Ontario, we have the ability in this House to recognize a national hero, and a hero that all of us share, because every day there are Ontarians fighting cancer. There are even survivors amongst us in this chamber. But more importantly, we need to continue to spread the message of courage, hope and determination.

Before I end, I also want to recognize my own colleague MP Arnold Chan. I know he may be watching. Some of you may know that my colleague Arnold Chan, the MP for Scarborough—Agincourt, is right now fighting cancer. Arnold, if you're watching, I'm thinking about you, and I know we will do this together. Thank you for your courage and determination, most of all. We know that Terry's spirit continues with you.

I want to thank all members today, because at the end of the day this is what the bill is about: bringing together all Ontarians. The message is that cancer can be beaten. In my culture, the Asian culture, cancer is not a disease that ends your life. This is what cancer means: There's hope, there's determination. That's what carries this message to each one of us. I hope we can pass this bill before the House rises this summer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the vote at the end of private members' business.

TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE HEALTH CARE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE FINANCEMENT TRANSPARENT ET RESPONSABLE DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Madame Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to promote transparency and accountability in the funding of health care services in Ontario / Projet de loi 78, Loi visant à promouvoir le financement transparent et responsable des services de soins de santé en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let me start by explaining a little bit what the bill is about. Basically, the bill was based on my experience. I spent two years working on Ornge and about half a year working on diluted chemo drugs. Throw in there a little bit of study about out-of-hospital premises, private clinics, infections and everything else, and that is the basis for Bill 78: to bring transparency and accountability on the money side of all of those new health care agencies that exist out there.

The bill does five things, and I'll go through them one by one.

The first thing that the bill does is that it extends the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act to every agency who receives more than \$1 million. For some of us who deal with this stuff all the time, we know what the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act is. It is the act that makes an agency FOI-able, so that you can file for freedom of access to information. It is the act that makes it the responsibility of an agency to report on their finances: their use of consultants and how they spend their money. They have to report to the government on

this information yearly. This is the first part of the bill: The Broader Public Sector Accountability Act will now apply to a large amount of health agencies that presently are not covered.

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That act already applies to our hospitals, but as soon as you take a service or a program from our hospitals and put it into the community, then the act doesn't apply anymore.

With this bill, it doesn't matter if programs and services are not offered by our hospitals anymore, and that they are offered in the community. We will be able to make sure that the same accountability and transparency will apply to them. Whether they're called out-of-hospital premises, independent health facilities, private clinics, the LHINs, the CCACs, the long-term-care agencies, the home care agencies—you name it—if they get more than a million dollars, all put together, in health care money, they are covered.

The second part of the bill is what is called the sunshine list. The sunshine list, here again, is a measure of transparency and accountability. The sunshine list: For anybody who makes more than \$100,000 a year, their salary is reported for everybody to see.

What will that mean? The sunshine list already applies to a big part of the health care system. You look right now, and everybody who works for a hospital or works for a community health centre—we already see who makes over \$100,000 a year. With this new bill, all of the other health care agencies that are big enough to make over a million dollars a year will have to report.

Here again, if you look at things like out-of-hospital premises—this is, I think, the Herzig Eye Institute, the Kensington institutes; the people who do the colonoscopies; some of the physiotherapy clinics that bill OHIP. Think of independent health facilities. Those are the labs, the technical aspects of health care, that sometimes happen outside of our hospitals. They will be covered. If they receive more than a million dollars, they will be covered. They will have to submit to the sunshine list, and we will see.

The third part of the bill is to give the Auditor General the powers to audit those agencies. The Auditor General right now has the power to audit a lot of health care agencies. We call them transfer payment agencies. The Auditor General can go into our hospitals, our community health centres. She can go into our mental health agencies and children's mental health agencies. But as soon as they become private, she's not allowed to go in. Now the bill will extend the power of the Auditor General so that if there is something going on—and she has good ways of keeping an eye on things—she will be allowed to go and do an audit.

This is taxpayers' money. This is the Ministry of Health's money. Out of the \$52 billion that we spend on health care, a very small part right now is covered by the Auditor General. I want to make that part bigger.

The fourth one, something that we have been working on for a long time, is Ombudsman oversight. For all of

those private entities out there, all of those independent health facilities, out-of-hospital premises etc., if a person has a complaint about the care that they receive, they will be able to put their complaints to the Ombudsman.

The fifth part of the bill is that we will have disclosure of the OHIP billings of everybody who bills over \$100,000.

I have here in front of me a Medical Services Commission financial statement for the year-end, ending March 31, 2004, from British Columbia. Many other provinces already do this. I can read to you all of the people in British Columbia who received money from their OHIP—it's not called OHIP, because it's British Columbia, but it's the same thing—and how much they bill. They've been doing this for decades. It's a good tool for transparency and accountability.

Those are the five big steps of the bill.

Why am I doing this? I'm doing this because, after having spent two years looking at Ornge, it became clear that between Dr. Mazza, the CEO of Ornge, his board chair, Mr. Rainer Beltzner, as well as their lawyer, Mr. Alfred Apps, they had decided to privatize pretty well every single action and program of Ornge, or air ambulance services. They had decided to privatize them. Their goal was that they were supposed to make money in the private system to invest back into the not-for-profit Ornge. The reality was completely different. The reality is that hundreds of millions of dollars that were supposed to provide care to people who needed air ambulance services got diverted.

When the Auditor General went in, he had a very tough time because they were quick to show, "Oh, no, our HR is privatized; you cannot have a look. Oh, no, our airplane maintenance has been privatized; you are not allowed to look into those books." The list went on and on, to the point where it seems like the only purpose of privatizing part of their operations was to be shielded from the oversight and shielded from the accountability that exist in other parts of our health care system.

To this point, our Minister of Health is on record dozens of times saying that when she found out—it was a woman at the time, Minister Matthews—that the CEO of Ornge was making \$1.4 million, that rang the alarm bell for her. She called the board into her office, and things changed quite quickly at Ornge.

I'm telling you, Speaker, had we had the sunshine list apply to the private entity of Ornge, we would never have been in this mess to start out with. We would have known. Had we had Ombudsman oversight of Ornge, we would have known for a long time, because the Ombudsman had received many, many complaints against Ornge for the poor services they were providing. But all he could do was say, "I'm sorry; I don't have oversight of Ornge."

Had we had those pieces in place, I am convinced that we would not have witnessed the demolition of our air ambulance services the way we did for so many years. We would not be in the situation we are now in where we see them basically trying to be reborn from their ashes,

because Ornge was pretty much destroyed for those years when they went on with their private enterprise.

A very telling part came when we received the review of Ornge air ambulance transport by the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario. The Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario reviewed hundreds of deaths that had happened within the air ambulance system; 40 of them were worthy of investigation. Out of the 40, there are eight that are suspicious. One of my colleagues will go into further detail as to what had happened to those people. Needless to say, he found five cases where it was a possible impact, one case where there was a probable impact and two cases where it was a definite impact on the death of the person. For these eight people, their family, their friends and their loved ones, I think we owe it to them to pass this bill.

That was only one part of the motivation. The second part of the motivation comes from the diluted chemo drugs. I and eight of my colleagues from all sides of the House reviewed what had happened. Again, one of my colleagues who was also on the committee with me will go into more detail as to what exactly went wrong. Needless to say, from all sides of the House, we all agree that we want the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act to be expanded to include people. We want the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act—this is the sunshine list—to be more inclusive, to be extended. We also want extension to the role of the Office of the Auditor General. That was a report that all parties agreed to and all parties want to happen.

What I brought forward in this bill is, I took the recommendations from Ornge and the recommendations from the diluted chemo drugs, I put them together, and I put them in a bill. This is Bill 78, which is in front of you right now.

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We have some oversight when it comes to the quality of the services that are offered in private clinics through the CPSO, but we have no oversight whatsoever as to what happens to the money. Bill 78 is really a way to create oversight, accountability and transparency so that the billions of dollars that are spent in health care—we have a way to look as to where they went and if they're providing good care to us. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very pleased to be speaking to Bill 78, An Act to promote transparency and accountability in the funding of health care services in Ontario. I'd like to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt and thank her for bringing it forward.

I support, as we all do in this House, the principles of greater accountability and transparency in government. Last year, I put forward a private member's bill that dealt with disclosure of expenses, which became part of government legislation. I'm very proud of that.

I also know that the member has had success as well with putting forward ideas that have gone into bills that have gone forward in government. We have such a bill before the House right now, Bill 45.

As I said, I support the bill and the principles of the bill. I do have some concerns.

I want to touch on the diluted chemo, because I did have the opportunity last year to join the committee for a few sessions. I understand the concern that she expressed, specifically with corporations that are created with the public as a shareholder, that operate outside our oversight. I think there was a case of a purchasing organization that was actually totally a public shareholder. I not only have concerns about how the function of that company is, but how the money flows from those companies back and forth.

When I look at the bill—and I think it's important that we debate it—I do think there are challenges when we start to talk about oversight and accountability inside a private company. That could be problematic. I think there may be ways of doing that that may be as effective and a little bit more workable. I'd like to look a bit more at the bill in terms of what its interplay is with Bill 8, which was passed in December, because there are a number of measures in there, and also in Bill 10, that I believe are similar.

I would like to speak to the oversight of the Auditor General, again for private companies. That's something, I think, that is somewhat problematic, but there's probably a way of achieving what you need to achieve, because we do want to know. Perhaps any company that is accepting public funds has to be an open and transparent company in terms of providing yearly statements.

When we talk about the sunshine list, which is essentially a good thing—there was a perverse effect from it, because it became an uncapped salary grid. What happened was, because we didn't have caps in place for salaries, it actually drove salaries up. That's a concern that I've always had with that. I think it's the right thing to do. I just don't think that the consequences of it were fully thought out or that we prepared for what might happen, which would again be looking at salary caps.

It's the same kind of concern over the OHIP billing. Obviously, they do it in other jurisdictions. The member's bill does express a concern about people comparing apples and oranges. My concern would be the same, of that happening inside that profession and creating some of the problems that we've had with the sunshine list.

Again, I'm going to support this bill. I support it. I think it's important that we debate this. I will look forward to, hopefully, getting it to committee and having further discussion about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to speak today on Bill 78, Transparent and Accountable Health Care Act, 2015, brought forward by the member from Nickel Belt, who is an excellent member and speaks very well on health care issues; we were both health care professionals before our lives at Queen's Park. But she told you of her long experience both in looking into Ornge and into the chemotherapy drug dilution problem. So she comes forward with a very—it's a very complex bill probably

for those listening at home to try to decipher. We just have a few minutes in debate, but I'll hit on some of the topics.

Basically, it extends aspects of the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and the Ombudsman Act. I won't be able to touch on all of them in the few minutes that I have—but she mentioned Ornge. It's a huge issue. It dominated the news. It should never have happened. It could have had more Ministry of Health oversight, really. As the ministry, they could have watched Ornge, which provides our air ambulance service for the province of Ontario.

There is a lot of accountability that does lie with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, that they had to watch what was going on. I believe they would have and should have known that Dr. Chris Mazza's salary was absolutely outrageous, out of control. It was an organization that had grown beyond what it was supposed to do but, again, did not have the oversight from the Ministry of Health to keep it in check, which is what needs to happen with the ministries.

The member from Nickel Belt has addressed aspects she'd like to see changed to watch that oversight and that that does not happen again. It was just a situation in Ornge that we will not want to see occur again.

The diluted chemotherapy scandals that came forward: I know that the member who is my seatmate—the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, just to make sure I've got his riding right—sat on that. He is a health care professional also, being a pharmacist. We certainly relied on his expertise. I just want to note that it was the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, which is a regional health centre for my riding, that was the first to pick up on the labelling—with the dilution problem with the chemotherapy drugs.

When that was brought up, there was a group purchasing organization, which is GPO, which is really partly owned, if not fully owned, by hospitals. It is under the Medbuy group.

There is some accountability in respect to that, in the fact that Medbuy, owned by the hospitals, receives rebates from drug companies—for bulk companies. That money is then to go back to hospitals. We don't know where that money is spent once it goes back into the hospitals, how it's put into the health care system.

Again, this is part of what the member from Nickel Belt is trying to address in this bill, about accountability of where the monies all go—who makes what, whose property, especially when it's the taxpayers' OHIP paying a lot of the bills. I commend her for wanting that oversight.

I just want to say that one more part from the committee that was looking into the diluted chemotherapy drug scandal was that hospital pharmacies now have to be licensed and basically regulated by the Ontario College of Pharmacists. I want to, again, commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who was on that, who brought that forward. That didn't exist, and most of us would not know that did not exist.

Those are a few parts that this bill will help address.

I know other members of my caucus want to speak to this bill.

I commend the member from Nickel Belt for bringing this through. She has had many years of trying to decipher what is wrong in this system. Thank you, again, for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to support my friend and colleague France Gélinas and her Bill 78, the Transparent and Accountable Health Care Act. This bill, if and when passed, will have a remarkable impact on improving the transparency and the accountability of our health system by extending the oversight of our publicly funded health care to the Auditor General and the Ombudsman, something we have been trying to do for years. This will ensure that the scandals that have plagued our health care system over the years, like Ornge and the diluted chemotherapy drug catastrophe, will never happen again.

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I need not remind you that chemotherapy—the drug scandal that took place only this time last year was one that caused 1,200 hospital patients to accidentally be given diluted chemotherapy drugs. Medbuy was the purchasing agent, a company at the time that arranged tendering of contracts for drugs.

Actually, the Speaker was involved in the committee.

Unfortunately, when all was said and done, they didn't specify the concentration level that the finished products were required to have. It took over a year before anyone realized what had happened. By then, the diluted chemotherapy drugs had already been in use by over 1,200 people in Ontario hospitals: 290 affected at the Windsor Regional Hospital, 691 at London Health Sciences Centre, 37 at Lakeridge Health and one person at Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

I took part in the legislative committee that was assigned to review this case. The committee prepared a report that Ms. Gélinas spoke about in her remarks: a series of recommendations to prevent those scandals from happening again.

I'm proud to see my colleague and NDP member France Gélinas take these recommendations one step further—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A gentle reminder to the member: We refer to ridings.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes—and put them into binding legislation to ensure that Ontario patients are protected and that health care scandals like Ornge and the diluted chemotherapy drugs never happen again.

Bill 78 includes three recommendations that were included in the report. The member from Nickel Belt has already spoken to those today.

As a former registered nurse and as someone who witnessed this case unfold in committee, I understand the hardship, the pain, the anguish that were suffered by these patients who were accidentally given these diluted chemotherapy drugs. It's impossible, I'm sure, for them to relay in words.

As a former cancer patient who received chemotherapy a number of years ago now, I understand the fear that patients experience through the normal process of a cancer diagnosis. First and foremost: potential chemo, radiation, possibly surgery, only to be compounded by finding out at the end of your process that in fact, "Maybe I didn't receive enough drugs to save my life."

The NDP bill that is before us will close those gaps. It will protect our patients. It will provide the necessary accountability and transparency that the public health care system needs. It will make sure that these scandals never happen again.

This is something that was totally avoidable if, in fact, we had had appropriate oversight in place.

I'm happy to have had the opportunity to speak to this. I hope we get all-party support on this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to speak to the private member's bill introduced by the member from Nickel Belt, Bill 78.

I share the same concern as my colleague from Ottawa South. I think, in essence, it's a good bill. It speaks to transparency—asks for more transparency in our broader health system.

I was just paying attention to the part of this bill where it says that a publicly funded supplier is a person or entity that receives, directly or indirectly, at least \$1 million in public funds in a year from major health sector organizations, or from other publicly funded suppliers. The word that I'm concerned about is "indirectly." How broad are we going to go in terms of coverage on the supplier? There is a cost. I'm completely supportive of transparency and accountability, but if that means that we've got to go far—a supplier of a sub-supplier of a sub-supplier—there is a cost to report all this information back into the system. That cost eventually, we all know, is going to add on to the client. It would be passed on to the client, which is the public sector. So I'm a little concerned about that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: So cost is more important than lives?

Mr. Han Dong: I said that I'm supportive of the bill. It's my chance to express my concern. I will probably talk to the member in private to clarify that.

The member also mentioned that the act provides for disclosure of payments made by the OHIP plan. I just want to cite that the Information and Privacy Commissioner previously has held the position that disclosure of any identified physician's billings would invade a physician's personal privacy under the current FIPPA.

I would like to learn a bit more about this bill. In essence, it's a good bill.

When we talk about transparency, I just want to remind the House that this government, in the past 10 years, has done quite a bit. If you remember—I think it was in 2004—as soon as we came into government, we introduced a bill that eventually got proclaimed to ban advertising using public funds. I think that was good

public policy. We expanded the scope of the Auditor General and the Integrity Commissioner, and that's good practice. I think there should be more accountability brought to the broader public sector because ultimately they have to be responsible, they have to be accountable to the taxpayers.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to the bill, and I'll learn a bit more from the member from Nickel Belt.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 78, the Transparent and Accountable Health Care Act, 2015.

This bill has been prompted by recent examples of inefficiencies and waste and resulting cuts in our health care system. From eHealth to Ornge, we have seen this Liberal government continue to waste precious health care dollars while some essential services, such as home care hours and surgeries, continue to be cut and nurses laid off.

In my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, in fact, potentially we face the elimination of a program called the restorative care unit at the Chesley hospital. So any claim by the government that they have strengthened the rules on transparency and accountability is far from reality.

We know that patient care will be safe from cuts only when this government stops wasting. To that end, we welcome measures to improve these measures so that Ontario patients can receive the front-line services they need. I commend my colleague France Gélinas from Nickel Belt for bringing this forward and certainly wish to support it.

Bill 78 aims to achieve better outcomes by requiring annual reporting on payments made by OHIP to major health care organizations and by ensuring that those who receive public funds of \$1 million and over are accountable for every dollar they spend.

This means that groups such as boards of health, community care access centres—by the way, there are over 230 CCAC employees on the sunshine list currently—air ambulance service providers, hospitals, independent health facilities, local health integration networks, long-term-care homes and out-of-hospital premises will all be governed by this.

As everyone here is aware, this legislation is in response to the spending problems that have plagued this government: \$1 billion on eHealth consultants; the diluted chemotherapy drug scandal—I think it was already acknowledged that my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Jeff Yurek, brought this to the attention of the Legislature. Certainly critic Christine Elliott from Whitby-Oshawa and I, as deputy critic for health care, have followed this very closely.

We have also had millions of dollars wasted on corrupt practices at Ornge air ambulance. To put it into context, this is money that could have provided beds for 25,000 senior citizens on the long-term-care wait-list or not forced the cuts of some 1,600 nursing positions across Ontario or bed closures across small community hospitals.

This bill should give us the ability to track expenditures and ensure that funds make their way from the treasury office down to service providers at the local level—most importantly, front-line care.

The Ontario public needs to know what funds make it to local agencies and what services are being delivered in their communities. This bill will allow us to actually look at any group, whether an indirect or a direct provider, that spends significant amounts of money or has the ability to have significant amounts of money from the provincial government given to them to provide health care in our great province. This, again, is critical. We need to have transparency and accountability at every level, particularly when we're talking about health care for the citizens of Ontario.

I'm pleased—and my PC Party caucus colleagues welcome any measure that's going to improve accountability over how health care dollars are spent.

With an aging population, the demand for health care resources will only increase and we need to ensure that every dollar spent on the sector enhances value and provides front-line care to those in need.

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In order to build a patient-centred health care system that emphasizes front-line care, we need the right tools to ensure that every dollar—every single dollar that's brought in—is spent wisely. I believe that Bill 78 is a step in the right direction. I look forward to being a part of the process, and at the end of the day hopefully we'll truly have an accountable and transparent process to ensure that every single dollar is spent wisely and the people of Ontario get the health care delivered that they deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm very honoured today to speak to this bill, because I know the critic has worked extremely hard on committee. It says here that she spent over two years investigating Ornge ambulance as a member of public accounts, and another five months investigation the diluted-drugs scandal in 2013. I know that our member from Welland was also on that committee.

With their background in the health care field, this is a great bill. This is a bill that's going to help oversight and accountability. It's been far too long that these kinds of things have occurred without those steps in place. When we're talking about the public purse, we need to make sure that those dollars are spent in health care in the way they were intended, to serve patients, because health care dollars are very precious. To see them go into private companies and for people's self-interest is extremely upsetting to both myself and my colleagues, and to the public, who rely on health care.

I was extremely proud this morning to be in attendance in the media studio with the health critic and to talk about this bill. We know that many of the cases that occurred with regard to this underdosing of chemotherapy actually were—a major percentage—in my hometown of London. We're talking about 690 patients who

were exposed in London out of the over 1,200 patients who were affected.

While we still don't know if their treatments were compromised, Speaker, I would like to share with you a statement from one of the people who were affected. It may not have affected this person physically, but I can promise you that the emotional price is simply too high when it comes to this situation of underdosing chemotherapy drugs in the health care system. This statement is by Virginia Offen:

"This statement is about diluted chemo. This kind of scandal should never happen again.

"Anything having to do with chemo should be regulated and overseen so that mistakes are not made.

"These are easy declarations for anyone to make, simple common sense really.

"But for those of us on chemo these declarations have to do with whether or not we die today or sooner than we might have.

"I don't believe the diluted chemo affected me physically because the amount of dilution was minute. That time.

"Who knows what could happen another time? The devastating part for me was the emotional price I paid. I had just finished six rounds of chemo on March 27.

"On the 11 o'clock news, April 2, 2013, I heard about the diluted chemo and was well aware that one of the diluted drugs was part of the three-drug cocktail I was on for all six of those rounds.

"I wondered if it was all for nothing because the chemo hadn't been full-strength. I didn't sleep at all that night.

"The next morning I called the hospital's 'info line' and was told they could not confirm whether or not my chemo had been affected.

"They told me I would be notified and eventually I was.

"I wish I had not heard about the dilution through the media but then I also wondered if I ever would have known had the media not reported on it.

"The journey with cancer is like a roller coaster ride, first you are up and then you are down, etc., etc.

"It isn't a journey for the faint of heart. None of us on this journey deserved this but I believe we all hope that a scandal like this never happens again."

Here's a personal story that I'm reading from a constituent in London, Virginia Offen. As I read that, my hair is standing up on my forearms, because it's a very emotional thing to talk about, somebody having a compromised health treatment in our health care system. Because we have 100% trust when we obtain some kind of treatment for cancer—we're using that example—and for that trust to be broken shakes people to their core. So I commend the health critic in the NDP for making sure that there's going to be a gap that's closed. They're going to close that loophole so that oversight is actually going to be actionable and this kind of thing hopefully never happens again. This is a preventative so that this won't occur, so that people won't be questioning their health care system and the treatment they get.

So I just want to say thank you to the health critic and the member from Welland for doing all that hard work on the committee. It sounds like people believe in this bill, and I'm looking forward to it continuing through the House and going to committee and coming back for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to thank the member from Nickel Belt for putting forward this bill and for her dedication to advancing health care in this province.

Here in Ontario, we are fortunate enough to have access to the greatest health care system in the world. This is a system that millions of people can rely on daily and that we're very proud of. This government is proud of the way this system is able to respond to the health care needs of the residents living in this province.

As great as our system is, we have to realize, of course, that there's always room for improvement and we always have to work at being better. We realize that effectiveness and efficiency aren't the only two requirements of a great health care system. Along with these two requirements we need a system that is transparent and that holds administrators accountable.

We need to hold ourselves to an even higher standard. Our priority is to ensure that Ontarians feel that their health care system is not only working effectively for them but is also accountable to them.

Being open and transparent about the way health care is administered in this province creates peace of mind for the people of Ontario and for all of us who are using the system. This is particularly important when considering the heightened stress and vulnerability that accompany many patients. As we evolve to become more accountable to patients and their families, we need to take the necessary steps to be transparent. This will help patients and their families to make well-informed decisions about their health and their health care needs.

A focus on transparency in our health care system was outlined in our Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. It was noted in the action plan that we recognize that Ontarians want their health care system to be transparent and accountable, and they want to know that it will deliver results for patients now and in the future.

The action plan also noted that "Giving Ontarians more information about how health care works and opportunities to provide their perspectives on their care will help identify how the system can work better."

Our Patients First action plan will support Ontarians to make healthier choices, help prevent disease and illness, engage Ontarians on health care so we can fully understand their needs and concerns, focus on people and not just their illness, and, finally, help us be more transparent in health care so Ontarians can make more informed decisions.

While our government's commitment to openness and transparency is unwavering, we must also be mindful of the significant privacy concerns that exist for our patients.

There are concerns that I have about Bill 78. Examples of such concerns are prevalent throughout the health care system, but when it comes to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the commissioner has issued several orders on the issue of making doctors' billings public. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has consistently held that the disclosure of an identified physician's billings would invade a physician's personal privacy under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. These are clearly delicate matters, and we need to remember that transparency needs to work hand in hand with Ontarians' right to privacy. We need to continue to work on striking that balance.

Another area of Bill 78 that I have concerns about, similar to my colleagues who spoke about this earlier, has to do with the parts referring to direct or indirect disclosure. On these items, being careful and moving forward sensitively are key, because we could be infringing on people's personal rights.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that Minister Hoskins announced the first patient ombudsman. The patient ombudsman will be appointed to help people who have an unresolved complaint about their care at a hospital or long-term-care facility.

I fully support increasing government's accountability and transparency. We are dedicated to making our health care system more patient-focused, allowing people to work with their health care partners in making the best possible decisions about their health and health care. I support this bill.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gila Martow: I'm very happy to speak on Bill 78, the Transparent and Accountable Health Care Act, 2015.

I want to start by mentioning the comment of the member from Halton. She said, "holds administrators accountable." Well, I think that's what it's all about. It's all about our health care system. The administrators are running the health care system right now, and running the hospitals. I'm not saying that's a bad thing, but it wasn't that long ago—when I was a kid—that it was more doctors who were the administrators making the tough decisions in the hospitals. I'm sure that doctors, being people, sometimes wanted to advance their own career, have more operating room time and things like that, but I really believe that the doctors put the patients first. I think that's what it has to be all about.

The reason for transparency and accountability: We have to realize that it's not just about fairness, and it's not just about making sure there is no corruption, such as the Ornge scandal and the electronic eHealth scandal; it's also about how we put patients first, how we ensure that the tax dollars we collect, which are given in trust to us, are going for front-line health care where they are supposed to be going.

The fact that at CCACs, where many of the front-line workers are earning fairly low salaries for home care,

there are so many administrators on the sunshine list should cause some alarm. Maybe there should be a ratio between administrators' salaries and front-line workers' salaries. We shouldn't see administrators earning salaries that much higher than front-line workers. Maybe there could be a system where front-line workers are doing a bit of the administrative work and it's not so separate the way it is right now.

In terms of physicians' privacy, we all know that physicians sort of have the worst of both worlds: They're government employees when it suits the government, and they're self-employed business people the rest of the time. I think it behooves the members from the NDP and the Liberal party, and even some of the members from my own PC caucus, to make the tough decision in their minds: Which is it? We can't expect doctors to pay rent, renovate offices, buy equipment, buy furnishings, pay staff salary, pay for staff training and pay for their own training—they have to do continuing education all the time—and then treat them as employees and say, "Well, we want to know what your billing is."

For the most part, they're self-employed business people right now, in terms of their salaries and billing. Obviously, the doctors who do earn salaries—it's fully disclosed when they are on salary. The reason we're not putting more doctors on salaries is because we're not finding it very cost-effective, or we would be doing more of it. The reality is that as soon as doctors are put on salaries, all of a sudden they're not working to the same degree they now are.

I would suggest that people here who are so anxious to have doctors' salaries and billings disclosed should maybe spend some time in a specialist's office and see how they take 10 minutes for lunch and maybe a five-minute break once in the morning and once in the afternoon, and most of them are there till way past when we're all home.

I think we're getting our value out of our physicians in this province, and I think we have to ensure that health care dollars are going where they're meant to go, and stop focusing on what the negative impacts are from that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand in support of my colleague, the member for Nickel Belt, regarding Bill 78, to increase transparency and accountability; specifically, in the health care system.

I would like to bring this debate back: It's not about dollars and cents; it's about people. If you recall, on June 6, 2012, we gave a standing ovation to a man named Trevor Kidd. He was in the members' gallery, and he made a deposition in front of the committee looking into air Ornge about the problems he had identified. He deserved that standing ovation—Trevor Kidd comes from my riding—because he quit his job as a paramedic at Ornge in disgust in 2009, after having knocked on so many doors and trying to find someone who would listen to him regarding the problems at air Ornge—the patient problems—and no one listened. He quit in disgust after

no one listened, and eventually he ended up back at that committee as one of the witnesses who actually opened people's eyes.

So it's not about dollars and cents. Some of the things that maybe could have been prevented if someone had listened to Trevor—and I'm going to read one of them from the Review of Ornge Air Ambulance Transport Related Deaths, from the coroner:

"Case #1—Possible Impact

"This 55-year-old man had a past medical history of heart disease. He presented to a community hospital in northern Ontario at 0620h with right-sided paralysis and severe weakness that he noted upon waking up that day. At 1500h he experienced a seizure lasting approximately 10 minutes. Medical imaging showed a blood clot in an artery in his brain. This was treated with appropriate medications, and arrangements were made for him to be transferred to a definitive care hospital in south-central Ontario.

"The air ambulance was requested at 1752h. Ornge requested that the patient's medication be changed prior to transport, which was done and confirmed with Ornge by 1840h. The air ambulance arrived at the patient at 2245h—four hours—"and the patient arrived at the receiving hospital at 0315h. He died two days later."

That's what this bill is about, because this didn't happen 20 years ago; this happened a few years ago. There are all kinds of other organizations in the health care sector that need this oversight. There's no guarantee right now that they're getting it, just like there was no guarantee when this happened.

That's why this bill is so important today, and why I'm so happy that the member from Nickel Belt brought it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for all your comments. I now return to the member for Nickel Belt. You have two minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I thank everybody who has participated in the debate today. It was much appreciated.

Bill 78 is really quite simple. We bring oversight, transparency and accountability that already exist—we already have these bills in Ontario, and we make them cover all of the new ways that we are providing health care in our province, things like Ombudsman oversight, things like the Auditor General having a look, things like the public sector accountability act or the sunshine list. We take tools that already exist and we make sure that the new way of providing health care is transparent and accountable.

After spending two years looking at Ornge and six months looking at the diluted chemo drugs, I am certain that there are other Ornges out there. With a budget of \$52 billion—an annual budget of \$52 billion—that's a lot of money. I am convinced that what happened at Ornge, as we speak right now, could be happening in a number of other health care agencies.

It is high time that we take the tools we have in this House, the bills that we have, and bring them up to speed

as to how health care is delivered right now. We know that more and more programs and services are taken out of our hospitals—that have all of those transparency and oversight mechanisms—and those services are being provided in the community with no oversight.

All we're saying is that if the program and the service moves into the community, moves into the private sector, then the oversight, the transparency, has to follow. It's as simple as this.

I thank all the members for their support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all. We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

NATURAL GAS SUPERHIGHWAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'AUTOROUTE DU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Bailey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel / Projet de loi 76, Loi visant à encourager l'achat de véhicules utilisant du gaz naturel comme carburant.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It is a pleasure to be here today and to raise this bill. I think it's an important bill. I'm honoured to rise in the House today to discuss Bill 76, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel, or as I call it, the Natural Gas Superhighway Act, 2015.

The reasoning behind the introduction of this bill is simple: natural gas, or LNG, as a transportation fuel is an opportunity to do what is right both for our natural environment and our business environment.

In his 2012 report, A Question of Commitment: Review of the Ontario Government's Climate Change Action Plan Results, the Ontario environmental commissioner reported that because of the sheer volume of cars and trucks on Ontario's roads today, Ontario's transportation sector continues to be the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the province. Over nine million vehicles on the road were registered in the province in 2010, and because of increased trade, the development of supply chain management systems and just-in-time delivery models, the number of large freight vehicles on the road has actually doubled in the last 25 years. Not surprisingly, this sector has witnessed a significant increase in its emissions.

Today, of the nearly nine million vehicles on the road in Ontario, medium- and heavy-duty vehicles make up just 3% of the traffic, yet they contribute to 20% of greenhouse gas emissions.

If the government of Ontario is really serious—and all of us should be—about reducing greenhouse gas emis-

sions, then it's time we look at offering a real alternative to those who operate medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in our province. One way to do that is by leveraging the ongoing development of Ontario's vast gas deposits.

Interest in natural gas as a transportation fuel isn't new. Past support from federal, provincial and private-sector initiatives has led to over 35,000 light-duty natural gas vehicles, like buses, being put on the road in Canada. Unfortunately, because of previous market conditions, the critical market uptake needed to grow the NGV market did not occur, but as we are all well aware, in the last five years the access to a supply of readily available natural gas in North America has changed that story dramatically.

New opportunities are being created across the continent. Canada and the United States have been given the opportunity to dramatically shift the current energy supply makeup and at the same time stimulate their slow-growth economies.

In his 2012 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama stated just that: "We have a supply of natural gas that can last America" and North America over 100 years for sure. Experts believe this will support "more than 600,000 jobs by the end of the decade."

Don't let this message be misconstrued. Natural gas is not the be-all and end-all of the energy supply; rather, it is a very significant piece of that puzzle, an extremely abundant, safe and affordable piece which is yet to be recognized for its full potential.

Research and product development in the area of natural gas procurement and use is leading to innovative new technologies and product design that have the potential to reshape conventional thinking in many areas, most locally, as a reliable, heavy-duty transportation fuel. In fact, in its assessment of the resource, Natural Resources Canada identified medium- and heavy-duty on-road transportation as the greatest value proposition for natural gas transportation fuels moving forward.

New, reliable truck engine technology that utilizes natural gas is giving America's hard-hit cargo transportation sector a shot in the arm, reducing emissions, lowering transportation costs and delivering critical cost savings to industry's bottom line. Heavy-duty truck manufacturers like Freightliner, Kenworth, Peterbilt and Volvo have all recently developed product lines to utilize liquefied natural gas.

The Natural Gas Superhighway Act, 2015, aims to promote the use of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, as a freight transportation fuel in Ontario by accommodating its advanced engine technology and providing an incentive designed to stimulate private investment in its proven lower-carbon-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles.

Specifically, the Natural Gas Superhighway Act, 2015, calls upon this Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enable a Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing higher weight limits for vehicles that use LNG as a transportation fuel. Just as a little example: Current road limits restrict vehicles to a gross

weight of 63,500 kilograms. The equipment required to run the cleaner, cheaper liquefied natural gas can add as much as 1,500 kilograms to the weight of a truck tractor using the fuel versus trucks using more traditional fuel.

In a day and age when transportation companies must maximize the use of their equipment to stay competitive, this small variance in weight allowance is enough to keep companies from taking advantage of the lower-greenhouse-gas-producing natural gas transportation fuels in Ontario.

Moreover, the Natural Gas Superhighway Act requires the Ministry of Transportation to table a progress report to this Legislative Assembly annually until the regulations are made that support the use of liquefied natural gas.

We ask for this because we understand that not everything can be done overnight, but what industry is asking for is that this government recognize the importance of natural gas as a transportation fuel. With that show of support from this government and all of the opposition parties, I have heard from many private operators who believe that heavy-duty LNG vehicles are the logical choice for their company. These same companies tell me that they are eager to make investments in Ontario by building infrastructure like refineries, refueling stations and maintenance facilities needed to support this next generation in transportation fuel.

For an example, one needs to look no further than my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, where Royal Dutch Shell has plans in place to build one of Canada's largest LNG plants to support the use of liquefied natural gas as a transportation fuel for Ontario's hard-working Great Lakes freighters. Many companies are making those conversions to LNG as they buy new ships. Anyone looking at this should be able to recognize the incredible opportunity that exists for the on-the-road transportation fuel sector.

My natural gas bill would also provide for a non-refundable tax credit—half of the Ontario portion of the HST, or 4%—for seven years to taxpayers who purchase these vehicles: trucks, ships and trains. I didn't mention that this is also being looked at by the rail transportation companies that use LNG or natural gas or CNG as a fuel. This credit is intended as a small incentive to help truck owners and fleet operators transition their fuel over time from the traditional fuels to the new, cleaner-burning natural gas, building that critical mass in industry and speeding the reduction of greenhouse gases from traditional sources.

Thanks to similar incentives and with an expected fuel cost savings of between 20% and 30%, many major American trucking companies are already taking the important first steps to transition to natural gas as a fuel source. Moreover, our neighbours, the province of Quebec, have taken early action by offering fiscal incentives to encourage commercial fleets to also make these adjustments—tax measures such as accelerated capital cost allowance on new trucks; instituting something called PEET, which is the program for improving energy

efficiency in road, rail and marine, which funds up to \$15,000 per truck for alternative fuels—this is in Quebec; and investing in infrastructure for what they call the “blue corridor,” which is essentially the Quebec portion of the MacDonald-Cartier or the Windsor-Quebec City transportation and manufacturing corridor.

In addition, Alberta has also updated their highway regulations to allow for increased weight allowances for LNG trucks on their roads, and they’ve opened three heavy-duty natural gas refueling stations along the Calgary to Edmonton route.

British Columbia has created a \$104-million natural gas for transportation incentive program which reimburses up to 80% of the price differential between a natural gas vehicle and a diesel vehicle.

All of this activity is driving investment in the private sector across Canada. Robert transport of Quebec has invested in over 180 LNG trucks over three years. Many of those trucks run into Toronto every day. Vedder Transport of Abbotsford has invested in 50 LNG trucks. Waste Management both here in Ontario and in BC have invested in over 40 CNG trucks. Gaz Métro, which is in Quebec, has invested in five private LNG stations along the “blue corridor.” Shell, Encana and Ferus Inc. are also investing in LNG facilities. All told, these private companies are representing a more than \$350-million investment in the private sector.

Yet the main artery of Ontario’s once-proud manufacturing economy, the Windsor-Quebec corridor, has virtually no share of that investment, despite having the largest marketplace and the greatest number of industry players ready to take advantage. The only LNG refueling station along the 401 corridor opened last year in Woodstock, Ontario.

If Ontario doesn’t take steps soon to open its borders to the same type of innovation and investment, we risk being left behind and our businesses will fall further behind in their ability to get their products to market at competitive prices. The time is right for the province of Ontario to seriously look at the promotion of natural gas as a transportation fuel.

I ask that all the members support the Natural Gas Superhighways Act 2015, today. By doing this, we can move this important piece of legislation to committee, where we can hear from many of the industry stakeholders about the importance of opening the Ontario Market to the investment opportunities that come with this clean, abundant and North American energy resource.

1550

To reiterate, the intent of the Natural Gas Superhighway Act is to enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing those weight limits for vehicles that use LNG, as well as to require the Minister of Transportation to table that progress report on an annual basis, and also to provide for that non-refundable tax credit of the Ontario portion of the HST for up to seven years for those business owners and taxpayers who purchase these commercial vehicles,

trucks, ships and trains that would use this new liquefied natural gas as fuel.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and all my colleagues in the House from all three parties for taking the time to be here today and to listen to this bill, which I think is of critical importance to the province of Ontario as we go forward and rebuild the great economy of Ontario. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I’m pleased to rise on behalf of New Democrats today to speak to the Natural Gas Superhighway Act. This is a bill that essentially enables regulations prescribing higher weight limits for vehicles that use liquefied natural gas as a transportation fuel. It would also require the Minister of Transportation to table a progress report to the Legislative Assembly annually until these regulations were made. And it would provide for a non-refundable tax credit in the amount of half of the Ontario portion of the HST, which is 4%, for seven years to taxpayers who purchase vehicles that use natural gas as fuel.

Before getting into any other specifics about the bill, I’d like to raise the issue that typically, as we know, private members’ bills do not have financial incentives. This one in particular looks like it has a lot of revenue generation attached to it, so I don’t know where that goes. There are certainly other considerations that would need to be addressed as well.

We know that in 2010, the transportation sector was responsible for the largest volume of greenhouse gas emissions province-wide, and the sector has also witnessed a significant increase in emissions since 1990 while other sectors—electricity and industry—have seen a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.

Medium- and heavy-duty vehicles make up only 3% of vehicles on the road today, but they contribute 27% of the greenhouse gas emissions from on-road sources. Providing an incentive for transport operators to convert to natural gas certainly makes sense on the surface from both an environmental and a cost-saving perspective. As a transportation fuel, however, natural gas certainly represents a cleaner alternative to traditional fuels, particularly diesel, for medium and heavy trucks, trains and ships. This would result in a decrease of greenhouse gas emissions from on-road sources.

But there are certainly more considerations I’d like to see explored in committee, when this actually gets to committee. I’d like to see the environmental considerations explored much more extensively. Natural gas certainly produces lower greenhouse gas emissions than traditional sources like diesel fuel, but it still produces them. It’s a fact that can’t be ignored, Speaker, and it is worth noting.

I see the Speakers have changed.

Technology used to obtain natural gas is primarily responsible for the current low prices in natural gas, and there are some concerns about the use of this technology. Our caucus had the pleasure of meeting the Environment-

al Commissioner today, and we discussed this issue at some length. What arose from that meeting is that there's still much to be defined, explored and researched.

This issue has come up in my riding of Welland and in the Niagara region over the last few years. Concerns were raised by Great Lakes United and by the St. Catharines and District Council of Women. More concerns came up from the public when the Niagara Falls Water Board in New York was looking at possibly processing waste water from the fracking technology. Given the proximity of the Niagara River and the unconfirmed environmental and health impacts, residents certainly raised some concerns when that was talked about.

A moratorium on technology has been passed by the region of Niagara until further environmental studies and proper assessment are done. The Council of Canadians and others who are campaigning for a moratorium across Canada have concerns about water, about increased greenhouse gas emissions and about dangers to wildlife, and there are some financial considerations, as well.

In addition to these concerns, it's not clear if the bill uses an appropriate financial mechanism. In BC, for example, they've taken another route. That government, in British Columbia, passed a regulation that allows utility companies to deliver natural gas transportation programs until March 2017. Quebec, too, has taken a different approach than this bill.

Speaker, the non-refundable tax credit of half of the Ontario portion of the HST would require federal amendments to the tax act to make it operational. Given the level of co-operation between the current provincial Liberal government and the current federal PC government, there is no guarantee that in fact it would be possible without the federal government on board.

Lastly, we've seen the price of diesel fuel skyrocket by 165% since 1990. This is basic supply-and-demand economics. The current supply of natural gas is much higher than it will be 20 years from now, and as that supply begins to decrease, it will mean that the price of natural gas may not stay at its present low price level forever. What impact will that actually have on home heating with natural gas down the road? We have many people in this province who are heating with electricity who would like to move to natural gas because they can't afford the freight of electricity bills in this province, which have increased 325% since 2003.

That said, I think it's worth getting this private member's bill to committee. We definitely want to hear from the experts and the delegations on how the details of this natural gas conversion financial incentive might work and should work. We also want to hear about the concerns of the public. Unfortunately, we have a Liberal government whose clean energy policies largely mirror those of our federal Conservative counterparts, so it will be interesting to hear what the Liberals have to say on this bill.

There may be benefits to the environment and to our economy in converting from diesel to natural gas, and I look forward to having more discussion about this bill in

committee in the upcoming future. Thanks for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Speaker, I'm happy to stand today on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Cambridge to add to this discussion, and I'm happy to be able to discuss private member's Bill 76, the Natural Gas Superhighway Act, introduced by my colleague across the aisle. I want to thank the member from Sarnia-Lambton for introducing the bill and drawing attention to a very important issue, the use of natural gas in vehicles across the province.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I'm happy that the member opposite is discussing the use of natural gas in this province. I also wanted to let the member know that at recent ROMA and AMO conferences I've met with several delegations from his riding of Sarnia-Lambton on transportation issues, and it's always a pleasure to talk to those officials in his riding.

Bill 76 seeks to promote the purchase of vehicles that run on natural gas through the amendment of both the Highway Traffic Act and the Taxation Act. It would amend these existing acts together to alter weight requirements such that tax credits or subsidies could be provided for people who move away from vehicles running on petroleum and towards vehicles that run on natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for helping to bring light to the benefits of natural-gas-operating vehicles. I don't think that all members of the public are aware that that could be a possibility in the future. Natural gas, as we know, burns cleaner and safer than petroleum, and it's an excellent alternative that we should certainly be encouraging.

Natural gas releases significantly less greenhouse gas emissions than petroleum because it has a lower carbon content and higher energy mass than regular fossil fuels. It can produce around 25% less CO₂, or carbon dioxide, emissions than petroleum, as well, and so the increased use of natural gas can help us in our efforts to reduce emissions and fight climate change in our province, our country and on this planet.

1600

Natural gas is also cheaper than petroleum and, as such, can help us to solve some of the issues relating to transportation costs in Ontario. As the PA for transportation, I know how important this is for Ontarians. In some ways, the use of natural gas can bring us closer to our goals, and it's great that the member from Sarnia-Lambton has brought this forward.

I'm also pleased to see that a member of the official opposition introduces a bill that seeks to address carbon emissions and combat climate change. This is especially wonderful, given the official opposition's precarious record on climate change and their frequent hesitation to support this government's initiatives to work towards environmental protection.

For instance, the member from Carleton–Mississauga Mills and the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington have made statements in the recent past indicating they don't believe that climate change is a legitimate and important issue. Given how serious climate change is, it's concerning that some members of the official opposition disagree. In light of it, I am glad that the member opposite is bringing this bill forward. It's encouraging to see him rise above partisan politics to help combat climate change. It shouldn't be a partisan issue, and I thank the member opposite for agreeing.

A few weeks ago, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell introduced a motion urging MPPs to come together, recognize the science behind climate change and move towards solutions to this pressing problem. Discussion of climate change is really important, and I'm happy to engage in the discussion today.

While Bill 76 does include some notable benefits in terms of encouraging drivers to switch from vehicles running on petroleum to those using natural gas, there are some issues with natural gas that warrant further discussion. More consultation is needed to ensure that all bases are covered.

Again, thank you, and I look forward to more discussion into increased use of natural gas in vehicles. More consultation is needed, and I look forward to seeing that move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It really gives me great pleasure to speak in support of Bill 76 today, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel.

I want to begin by commending the member for Sarnia–Lambton for bringing this bill forward. It's actually a bill that he introduced in the previous provincial Parliament. It was known as Bill 97. It had second reading debate at that time. I believe it was endorsed by the House and went to committee, but unfortunately, because of the untimely 2014 election, it wasn't given the opportunity for extensive committee discussions and then, in turn, third reading.

The member for Sarnia–Lambton has a great record of bringing forward sensible private member's bills that have enjoyed the confidence of the House and been passed into law. I think of the One Call bill that he introduced a few years ago, to ensure that you'd only have to make one call to get all the locates for the underground utilities. It was something that he had pushed for some time. It was strongly endorsed by many groups in Ontario, and eventually the provincial government saw fit to support it as well.

The tax credit for farmers who make donations of surplus produce to food banks is something that our caucus strongly supported and, as I said, eventually the government came onside as well.

The member was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 2007, so he has been here now for eight years and three elections. He has certainly enjoyed the

confidence of his constituents through three elections, and he has done an outstanding job here.

Prior to that, he was a councillor in Enniskillen township, which is around the Petrolia community. He served for many years on the hospital board and local council, as I said. He was actually the returning officer in a couple of provincial elections, where I'm sure he ensured that the ballots were properly counted.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: He did well in that responsibility as well.

Again, this is a great bill. I don't have too much time, and there are other members who want to speak to the bill. We're certainly encouraged by the comments by the member for Cambridge, who serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. Although she took a few shots at members of our caucus for statements they may have made—I'm not sure if they've made them or not. Certainly for my part, I would say, and acknowledge again, that the vast majority of climate scientists would say that the earth is warming. Global warming is a fact. In fact, the preponderance of scientific opinion would suggest that human activity is a significant contributing factor, and we all have to be concerned about that.

I know that we're debating a bill this afternoon—actually, a government bill will be called for debate after private members' business, where we discuss the bill that the government has brought forward with respect to the closure of the coal plants. We'll have a lot to say on that.

Again, the member for Sarnia–Lambton deserves enormous credit for bringing this forward again. The bill is intended to support the greater use of liquefied natural gas as a transportation fuel.

The bill would ensure that there are regulations prescribing higher weight limits for vehicles that use liquefied natural gas as a transportation fuel; that the Minister of Transportation would have to table a progress report to the Legislative Assembly annually until those regulations are made; and to provide for a non-refundable tax credit, which would be half of the Ontario portion of the HST, or 4%, for seven years to taxpayers who purchase vehicles, whether they be trucks, ships or trains, using natural gas as their fuel.

This is a very sensible suggestion. I think it's a very important economic initiative that the member is bringing forward—one of the most important bills that we'll be discussing today.

I would encourage all members to support this bill at second reading. Let's get it to committee, let's hear from the people and let's get it passed into law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to discuss Bill 76, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel.

I understand the logic put forward by the member from Sarnia. There has been a history here in Ontario of exploring for oil and gas. There has been a history of oil and gas production. We're also a province that manu-

factures. We still manufacture, so we need the ability to move goods from here to there.

But I have to say that I do not support this bill. I think we have to recognize—and I've heard people here speaking about climate change—that if we're actually going to take on climate change we have to substantially reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. In fact, we have to leave most of the fossil fuels we've discovered in the ground.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has reported on that realization. He says that two thirds of the fossil fuels that are recognized in oil and gas company reserves have to stay in the ground if we're to avoid a rise in global temperature greater than two degrees.

I was here for the debate—I guess it was two weeks ago—impassioned statements by Liberals and by Conservatives about the need to take on climate change, the need to avoid catastrophic rises in world temperature.

If we're going to do that, we have to recognize that as we transition out of fossil fuels, we need to literally transition out of them. If we're going to make transportation more environmentally sustainable, we need to move to electrification of the rail system; we need to invest where it's going to make the biggest difference and not simply perpetuate the burning of fossil fuels.

That's one argument that concerns me about this bill. The other is that there is not an infinite amount of gas at a price that people can afford. People in this province use gas for cooking; they use it for heating; they use it for making electricity; and they use it in industrial processes. Every time you add a new significant market for natural gas, you drive up the price of that gas.

Everyone in this House can talk about the experience they've had talking to constituents, or personally when they've opened their own gas bill, of the cost of energy. Are we really saying that we want prices for home heating to be substantially higher? Are we saying that we want things to be more difficult for manufacturing in this province?

I would say: If we have to make a choice in a finite world, it makes more sense to use natural gas where its use is critical. It is not critical in transportation.

This bill will allow much heavier trucks on the road, leading to faster degradation of roadbeds and more expense in maintaining them. If we adopt this bill, we will lose revenue that could be used in other ways, that could be used to invest in sustainable and renewable forms of energy and in sustainable forms of transportation.

If we are going to reduce our revenue, if we're going to give incentives for transformation of transportation infrastructure, then we need to do it in ways that give us the greatest possible payback in terms of greenhouse gas emission reduction and in ways that don't expand demand for fossil fuels—fossil fuels that we shouldn't be burning, that we do not have the room to burn ecologically on this planet.

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Speaker, I also want to talk about the stability of price and availability. A few decades ago, we had a glut of

electricity in Ontario and we had a vast program of electric heating that was sold to the people of Ontario. Tons of people in rural Ontario got electric baseboard heating and electric forced-air heating, and now they are paying through the nose for that.

A number of years ago, propane was cheap. Propane suppliers were beating the bushes to get people to dump their oil and go to propane. Well, last winter, they paid a fortune to get that propane.

We have an industry—the natural gas industry—that currently has a glut on its hands and wants to vastly expand its market.

Bloomberg reported in the last few months that a lot of the shale gas revolution in the United States is financed by junk bonds. That easy credit has made this revolution in shale gas possible, but one can't rely on that in the long term. Many of those firms don't actually make money. Many of those firms live on those junk bonds and, given the glut in the market right now, many of them will have difficulty surviving. That will dramatically change the numbers on availability of gas.

For a number of reasons, we need to keep gas in the ground, where we can. Let's not drive up prices for homeowners. And because there is uncertainty about the availability of this gas, I don't support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 76, the Natural Gas Superhighway Act, 2015, and in doing so, to join my colleagues from Welland, Cambridge, Wellington-Halton Hills and Toronto-Danforth.

I want to congratulate the member from Sarnia-Lambton for putting forward this legislation. I know, from my previous life, prior to being elected, that the member opposite appreciates the contribution of alternative transportation modes. Cycling is an issue that I know he supports. Having been in his riding with him in a previous context, I know he appreciates that.

It's very encouraging to see a member of the party opposite bring forth legislation that attempts to deal with real problems associated with climate change. These are issues that we must address quickly, as they will only get worse the longer we wait—something we must all take seriously and work together to solve.

As we all know, Ontario currently relies on fossil fuels for the overwhelming majority of its transportation needs. Burning fossil fuel, especially petroleum, puts a great amount of carbon into our atmosphere and damages our environment, something that so far has been an unavoidable result of our need to get around. Not only is petroleum harmful in some ways, but it is becoming increasingly expensive, as I know the member opposite appreciates—something that I think we all have seen at the pump in the recent past.

Natural gas has the potential to be a much more affordable alternative to traditional fossil fuels in our province. Not only is it cheaper, but it is also safer and cleaner burning. Natural gas generates significantly less

greenhouse gas emissions than regular fossil fuels, including 25% less CO₂, and it has lower carbon content and higher energy mass. These qualities make natural gas an appealing alternative to the current fuels we use, and a potential tool in our efforts to reduce carbon emissions in this province. Lowering the amount of carbon we release into the environment while simultaneously lowering the cost of transportation seems at first glance like a win-win situation.

Interest in the use of natural gas as a transportation fuel stems largely from the fact that there is an abundance of supply here in North America. There have been major developments of shale gas deposits in the north-eastern United States recently that have led to a boost in available natural gas at a lower cost. We cannot, however, take this at face value. We must take every precaution to ensure that there are no unintended negative impacts on our environment. Our government is fully committed to the protection of Ontario's natural heritage, and currently more information must be gathered before we can say for sure that natural gas will be an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional fuel sources.

There is also an infrastructure component to the discussion around natural gas. Fueling stations that allow for the use of natural gas will need to be built across major transportation routes for commercial use, and more broadly if the citizens of Ontario, and the citizens in my riding of Burlington, in point of fact, are to be able to take advantage. There will also need to be storage and distribution facilities created, and access to the vehicles and technology that use natural gas as a fuel source.

All of this will come with an associated monetary cost, which at this point has not been determined. This is not to say that the infrastructure cannot, or should not, be invested in. It is simply something that must be included in the broader conversation surrounding the use of natural gas as a transportation fuel. We cannot simply say that natural gas should become a relied-upon fuel source because it has worked elsewhere; we need to look at how this will impact the unique landscape of Ontario.

Ultimately, I'll be supporting this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage all my colleagues in the House to do the same. This is an important step in the right direction, although I feel that much more must be done if we are to ensure that Ontario's environment is protected to the best of our abilities. Natural gas definitely has the potential to be a more environmentally friendly alternative to other fossil fuels, but we must make sure that this is in fact the case. I look forward to discussing the matter further with the member in committee and to working together to find solutions to the many environmental issues we face here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to acknowledge the work of my colleague and MPP for Sarnia-Lambton—Ontario's proud gas community—Bobby Bailey, in putting this bill before the Legislature two times. The only way I think he could have presented it better, Mr. Speaker, is if he had

sung his 12 minutes instead of just talking about it, because he's a heck of a singer. Bob deserves much recognition for his efforts in championing the expansion of natural gas in the transportation sector. As I mentioned earlier, this is the second time he has brought this; before, it was Bill 97. Sadly, it died on the order paper.

This bill aims to do two things: one, lower economic barriers to market entry and encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel through a tax credit; two, reduce regulatory barriers and amend regulations to prescribe higher weight limits for natural-gas-powered vehicles.

Using this fuel system is a good choice, not only because it would reduce our reliance on crude-oil-based fuels, but also because, first, it's domestically available. Recent growth in our natural gas supply gives us confidence that our deposits in North America could meet our demand for another century. It's also cheap, safe and cleaner than other fuel systems. Ontario's Environmental Commissioner warns that cars continue to be the biggest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, and this factor will continue to rise as energy demand for transportation rises.

Imagine if we powered all medium- and heavy-duty vehicles with liquefied natural gas. That's about 3% of the vehicles on the road today, not a significant share of road users; however, if we did, we would potentially reduce as much as one quarter, 25%, of greenhouse gas emissions from on-road sources.

A poll by Nanos from a few years ago found that Canadians were highly motivated about surpassing the United States in green transportation. Today, natural gas powers about 150,000 vehicles in the US and roughly 12 million vehicles worldwide. It's clearly a viable option for a lot of different countries.

Moreover, liquefied natural gas fueling stations are growing across the US, linking manufacturing regions and transportation corridors. In Canada, we only have about 12,000 vehicles, a mix of urban transit buses, some school buses, light-duty cars and trucks, and forklifts and ice resurfacers. I believe Bob also mentioned that there is an opportunity for rail to be involved in this as well, Mr. Speaker, so a huge opportunity if we just grab the opportunity.

I believe we can't afford to be left behind much longer. I encourage everyone to support this bill so we can overcome regulatory barriers and expand the use of natural gas across our transportation sector and reduce greenhouse gases.

There was a public opinion poll taken, and the question asked, "Which one of the following benefits from natural gas powered trucks and buses is the most important to you?" The key finding was that "more than half of Canadians (54.2%) thought that lowering emissions of trucks and buses by 25% by using natural gas instead of diesel powered vehicles was the most important benefit to them."

So, Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity here in front of us. I think we just want to ensure that we move

forward. A key message I want to leave with the people listening at home, and certainly here in the House today, is that natural gas is an affordable and safe fuel.

New engine technology is allowing North America's cargo transportation sector—medium- and heavy-duty trucks, trains, and ships—to use natural gas as a cheaper fuel. Lower transportation costs have the potential for Ontario's manufacturing sector to get their products to market at more competitive prices.

Estimates of the North American gas fields suggest accessible deposits of low-cost natural gas that could meet North American demand for the next 100 years. This would ease reliance on foreign fuel and certainly help our economy and our environment at the same time.

As a transportation fuel, natural gas represents a cleaner alternative to traditional fuels, especially diesel, for medium- and heavy-duty trucks, trains, and ships.

It's approximately 20% to 30% cheaper and 20% to 30% cleaner in regard to greenhouse gases.

British Columbia and Quebec have already adopted legislation to promote natural gas as a transportation fuel, as well as American jurisdictions such as New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Colorado, California, Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana.

According to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, the transportation sector in 2010 was responsible for the largest volume of greenhouse gas emissions province-wide. Also, the sector has witnessed a significant increase in emissions since 1990, while some sectors, such as the electricity industry, have seen a decrease.

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As I mentioned earlier, medium- and heavy-duty vehicles make up 3% of vehicles on the road today but contribute 25% of the greenhouse gas emissions. It is my hope that if we adopt this bill—a three-peat for Bob Bailey, my great colleague. He has already been successful in introducing the One Call act along with Paul Miller, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and his farm tax credit in the Local Food Act.

Mr. Speaker, I hope everyone in the House will endorse it, get it to second reading, to committee and get this bill approved.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the members from Cambridge, Wellington–Halton Hills, Welland, Toronto–Danforth, Burlington and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments so far this afternoon. I do want to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton—the hard-working member from Sarnia–Lambton—for introducing a very good bill, a bill that I will be supporting.

Mr. Speaker, we know that in order to meet the demand for affordable, clean and safe sources of fuel for future generations, businesses and governments are exploring the transformative potential of natural gas as a transportation fuel for North America's energy-dependent trucking and manufacturing sectors. We know that natural gas is a considerably less expensive, safer,

cleaner-burning fuel than petroleum. NG vehicles do offer comparable or superior performance to conventional vehicles, incur lower maintenance costs, and therefore improve the economic competitiveness of the companies that use them.

The recent development of vast shale gas deposits in North America has driven demand for what is becoming a readily available domestic fuel source that has historically been priced lower than oil, and it is a made-in-Ontario fuel source as well, I might add.

I'm very excited to see a member from the party opposite bring forward a private member's bill that could help reduce our carbon emissions in the province of Ontario, an initiative to which I know this government is intensely committed. Natural gas can produce 25% less CO₂ emissions than regular fossil fuels. To see the Progressive Conservative Party take up the issue of climate change is a positive sign.

A few weeks ago, my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell introduced a motion calling on members of the Ontario Legislature to come together and recognize the science of climate change and the urgent need for Ontario to act immediately. While that motion passed, the caucus of the party opposite doesn't seem to be unanimous in their views on climate change.

The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington stated at an all-candidates meeting in June 2014 that he is very skeptical about climate change, that we have problems today, that we can't worry about what may happen in 50 years and we need to address the problems that are now and factual.

So I'm happy that the member from Sarnia–Lambton does think that these things should be thought about today and in the future as well. I applaud the member's commitment to the environment and climate change by putting forward this private member's bill, especially given that perhaps his seatmate doesn't share his views on these matters.

Climate change is a great challenge, an issue that should be above partisan politics, and this is an issue that I'm happy we're debating in this House. I will be supporting this legislation, and I encourage all members of the House to do so as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise again today to speak to yet another bill before the Legislature. The member from Sarnia–Lambton, who is an outstanding member of our caucus—I know that was mentioned several times by the government members over there. I think they like the member from Sarnia–Lambton a little bit more than some of our other members. I won't mention any of their ridings.

The member always does things in very good conscience. He comes from the birthplace of natural gas and oil and gas: Sarnia–Lambton, we all know it well. He listens to what people are saying and he cares about the province of Ontario. So by introducing this piece of legislation, it encourages the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel.

Things are evolving. Natural gas as a transportation fuel is certainly an opportunity where we can do what is right not only for our business environment but also for our natural environment.

This will enable the Lieutenant Governor to make regulations prescribing higher weight limits for vehicles that use liquefied natural gas as a transportation fuel. It also would report annually to the Legislative Assembly. We're all about more transparency and accountability, and if things are working right or not working right—we've discussed that earlier in the Legislature also.

It's an affordable and safe fuel. You see that other provinces are certainly moving forward. The member talked about—what's that? The 401 corridor between—

Mr. Robert Bailey: The blue ribbon corridor.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The blue ribbon corridor from Quebec, but also the fact that hopefully we still have some manufacturing that may come to this province. We keep trying to make that happen. We have to be competitive.

Interjection: Three more years.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, three more years, and we might have a change in government that would actually do something to help manufacturing in the province of Ontario.

We've seen other provinces move on that. We've seen other states move on that. It makes sense, sure. Does it need to be debated? Do we need to hear in committee from the people who know, the experts? We do, for sure.

But we also know that Natural Resources Canada identified medium and heavy-duty on-road transportation as the greatest value proposition for natural gas transportation fuels moving forward. We've got reliable truck technology that utilizes natural gas, giving North America's cargo transportation sector a shot in the arm, reducing emissions and lowering their transportation costs, delivering critical savings to the bottom line.

The Environmental Commissioner, who, I want to say, is planning his retirement in the next few months, has commented on the transportation sector in 2010, that it was responsible for the largest volume of greenhouse gas emissions province-wide. This is a win-win situation for both business and for our natural environment.

The member for Sarnia-Lambton has done an excellent job of bringing this bill forward, and I think we may get support from the Legislature today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all for your comments.

The House is a little noisy, so I ask everybody to tone it down.

I now return to the member for Sarnia-Lambton. You have two minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank all the members from all sides of the House. I'll name them: the members for Welland, Cambridge, Wellington-Halton Hills, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Toronto-Danforth, Burlington, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Etobicoke-Lakeshore—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, and the member from Willowdale, who had lots of comments and interjections all the way through; I'll deal with him later. Anyway, they were all meant in that jocular tone that we all expect here.

Yes, there's lots of debate to have. I look forward to it if the Legislature sees the wisdom of passing this at second reading and we take it to committee: bring in some experts, bring in people from all sides—those opposed and those in favour—and hear from them. It's well known that there's a great supply of natural gas through different procedures in North America.

As the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock said, I come from the birthplace of the oil industry, the Oil Springs and Petrolia area, where it was first discovered. We're still pumping oil and still pumping gas. They're storing gas that's used here in Toronto and eastern Ontario at the Dawn hub. I know a number of people have had the opportunity to visit the Dawn gas plant; we call that the hub. We pump gas in there all summer long, and then it goes out to Toronto and all over the eastern parts of Ontario to heat during the winter, and we've had some cold winters.

Because of the environmental reasons and the cost for our manufacturers to get goods to market, there's all the right reasons to vote for this bill, to make this fuel available.

I was thinking: At the oil museum in Oil Springs, there's a quote on the wall from the Bible. It says, "Then the Lord said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.... and the rock poured me out rivers of oil." It's the same with natural gas today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak here today. I look forward to the rest of the debate and the vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

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TERRY FOX DAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE JOUR DE TERRY FOX

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 37, standing in the name of Ms. Wong.

Ms. Wong has moved second reading of Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j)—Ms. Wong?

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I would like the bill to go to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the committee on private regulations. Agreed? Agreed.

TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE HEALTH CARE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE FINANCEMENT TRANSPARENT ET RESPONSABLE DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Madame Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 78, An Act to promote transparency and accountability in the funding of health care services in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to the committee—Madame Gélinas?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to send it to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the item be sent to social policy. Agreed? Agreed. So referred.

NATURAL GAS SUPERHIGHWAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'AUTOROUTE DU GAZ NATUREL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bailey has moved second reading of Bill 76, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Mr. Bailey?

Mr. Robert Bailey: The committee on regulations and private members' bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it go to the committee on regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDING COAL FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement

pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh had the floor with time remaining. Pursuant to the order of the House of earlier today, I recognize the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. It's a pleasure to rise in my new role—or, might I say, my recycled role—as critic for the environment and climate change. I want to thank my colleague Percy Hatfield, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, who did able work as environment critic. As you have said, he was only able to get five minutes into his speech, so there's a little time left for me on the clock. I hope to be able to finish this commentary this afternoon.

The bill itself is pretty simple. As I said to the Sergeant-at-Arms the other day, when you hold it up to the light, you can see through it. It is not one of those great thick, complex bills, but it does carry out a particular task. It effectively bans the use of coal at four facilities in Ontario. It exempts the use of coal where it's not used to make electricity for the grid, or primarily for the grid. If you're burning coal at a car plant to make electricity and steam, then you carry on tomorrow as you carried on the day before.

I support this bill, Speaker. As my predecessor said, the plants in question are already closed, and this bill will make it more difficult for a future government to burn coal. No government will be able to start burning coal in those plants at the simple whim of cabinet. They won't be able to make a decision late at night in a boardroom somewhere here at Queen's Park, or simply at the end of an excellently catered meal around the cabinet table. They'll have to come down into this chamber and they will have to fight for it if they want to resume burning coal to make electricity. They will have to fight for the right to start choking people again, to start sending children with asthma to emergency and to make our whole landscape hazy again. Memories of smog: Let's put them behind us.

I see this bill as a firebreak against the return of coal. It's not a steel wall. If you want something far more permanent, you actually have to dramatically reshape the energy system. But it is a firebreak, one that would slow down any government that decided it wanted to use coal in this province, which is why it's intriguing to me that, both yesterday and today, the Minister of Natural Resources made it clear that he didn't support my bill to ban fracking.

I had said yesterday that, "There's no need for Ontario to risk environmental damage and lawsuits by leaving the door open to this controversial practice," and that we have the opportunity to learn from the hard experience of others—in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and New York state—and we could act now. But the Minister of Natural Resources said, "'We're internally reviewing what our plans will be and we'll go forward on that basis,' Mr. Mauro told reporters."

Speaker, I had a chance to talk to the Environmental Commissioner today, and that internal review has been going on since 2012. Somebody's talking to somebody, hopefully. I would say that it is time for the minister to move that internal review forward and decide that, in Ontario, our future is not with fossil fuels. It is not with fracked gas. It is with conservation and renewables.

I'm very curious to know if the minister is having conversations with the gas industry. He said in a comment to reporters that there are no fracking applications to the ministry, no one is seeking a licence and there's no exploration going on for fracking in Ontario right now. He didn't say if they'd been going on two or three days ago or if a meeting was scheduled for next week. He didn't say whether they were having general discussions in bars around town. He was fairly categorical in the items that were excluded. It intrigues me that, given the experience in other jurisdictions, given the concern that the governing party has expressed about climate change, he hasn't come forward and been very direct that this is not a road we're going down—not at all.

I've said that, here in Ontario, we need to be clear we're not going to allow fracking to go forward, because the experience in the United States is that the companies that drill for this shale gas that fracture the rock go through those gas deposits very rapidly—an 80% decline in productivity in the first year. So they're constantly having to drill for new sites and constantly having to look for new ground to explore. There's no reason for us to be part of that new ground. As you may well be aware, Speaker, the Marcellus Shale, one of the most prolific gas formations for fracking, based in Pennsylvania, continues under Lake Erie and up to the North Shore of Lake Erie.

We need to act now, act proactively, so that we don't have to deal with the lawsuits, the local fights, the local water contamination and the local noise problems years from now.

Mr. Mauro referred to my suggestion of natural gas deposits in Ontario as something that was "hypothetical." Speaker, if it's hypothetical, if there's no skin off anyone's nose, if we can avoid the sorts of lawsuits that Quebec is having to deal with now because they acted after the industry got involved, then it would make sense for the minister to support this bill.

The Minister of Natural Resources says that we don't need a bill to ban fracking because fracking isn't happening. By that same logic, the Minister of Natural Resources should vote against this bill because, in fact, we're not burning coal in our electricity generation plants today. It's not going on.

I have to ask: Will the Minister of Natural Resources speak for or vote in favour of this bill as we go forward? If he applies the same criteria that he has in dealing with the fracking of shale gas, then by rights he shouldn't be supporting the government on this bill.

1640

We need to go to the bigger picture, the context within which all three parties in this Legislature said they would stop burning coal in electricity plants in Ontario.

Two weeks ago, when we were debating the climate change resolution brought forward by the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, I read a quote from Lord Stern, a former head economist at the World Bank, directed by the British government to write a report on the financial impacts of climate change. In 2006, Lord Stern reported back and talked about the necessity for action. He said this in 2006: "The investment that takes place in the next 10-20 years will have a profound effect on the climate in the second half of this century and in the next. Our actions now and over the coming decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century."

We're talking about disruption of human society on an extraordinary scale, and those among us who may have lived through those events or talked to their parents or grandparents about those events know that in human terms that means we are engaged in a very high-stakes adventure, a very risky adventure.

Sometimes, Speaker, when you talk about that scale, it's outside of many people's experience, and it's hard for them to envision. So I want to talk briefly about some of the day-to-day impacts I have seen from climate change from global warming in this city. Last week, I was going door to door on Gerrard Street in my riding. I talked to a woman, a grandmother, whose hydro bill had come in at over \$1,200. That was about equal to her pension cheque.

Ms. Cindy Forster: For two months?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Two months.

I had a constituent last winter—all electric heating in his home—whose bill for two months was \$1,500. That is a tremendous hit to any person's pocketbook.

This February was the coldest we've seen on record in Toronto and the coldest in many parts of Ontario that has ever been seen on record. People felt that chill slam through them every time they went outside, and they felt that chill slam through their pocketbooks when they got their hydro bill.

I won't underplay the impact of privatization on the cost of electricity in Ontario or talk about the impact of bad Liberal policies on our prices. But we're going to have to recognize that more and more extreme weather is going to drive up our energy bills—because when it's very cold we're going to need more energy—and it's going to make the cost of running the system higher.

As world weather patterns change, we will see extreme weather in ways that we haven't seen before. While we were going through minus 20 degree days here in Toronto, in Fairbanks, Alaska, it was plus 5 degrees. It was one of the warmest Februarys they had ever seen. Weather patterns are changing. It isn't just that the world gets warmer like a bath slowly getting warmer as you put more hot water in. No. You get very disruptive, very chaotic events that people notice when hurricanes go through places like Goderich, and when you have Superstorm Sandy going through New York City or Hurricane Katrina going through New Orleans—more and more

disruptive events that have a huge impact in human terms and a huge impact financially.

In the summer of 2013, Toronto was hit with some of the worst flooding ever. I want to just read a bit about what the Toronto Star reported: "The storm and flash flooding that hit the GTA on July 8 has set a record for the province's most expensive natural disaster, according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada."

We're all going to be stuck with those bills, either through higher insurance bills or by incidental costs that aren't covered by insurance. I've already had constituents in my riding say that insurance companies have declined to renew insurance because they felt that their homes were vulnerable to flooding, that the sewer lines in their neighbourhoods weren't adequate to protect them, and so parts of their coverage would be cancelled.

In that Star article, the Insurance Bureau of Canada Ontario vice-president, Ralph Palumbo, made a statement about the storm, saying that, "While these preliminary estimates are staggering, we do expect them to go even higher."

He's right. We do see very high costs.

I have to tell you, there's more to global warming than just the costs; there's also a smell. That smell is sewage in your basement. In Ontario, our sewer systems, our waste water systems, are built for a climate that no longer exists. Rainfall patterns are not the ones we had last century. They're not the ones that engineers based the sewer and water systems on. They're becoming more and more different. Storms that used to happen once a century now happen twice a decade. That speaks to significant property damage and significant insurance costs. People are going to spend more time shovelling sewage out of their basements, and they're going to be spending more money. Global warming is hard on the nose, and it's hard on the pocketbook.

We can understand those particular risks, of extreme weather causing physical difficulty and of extreme weather causing expense—expense for energy and expense for repairs. But there's another level of concern that we need to start thinking about in this chamber and in this province, and that relates to financial stability.

I want to go back to talk about another event of financial instability that we need to take recognition of and incorporate into our thinking. That's the 2008 financial collapse related to subprime mortgages.

If you ever have the chance, Speaker, there was a fabulous book called *The Big Short*, by a writer called Michael Lewis. He followed the growth of understanding amongst a number of investors that the international financial system had a very big chunk of rotten, dangerous assets that were rated as highly creditworthy: subprime mortgages.

A number of analysts followed the records, looked at subdivisions in Phoenix, in Orange County, in San Diego and all over the United States where mortgages had been given to people so that mortgage companies could make a profit—given to people who couldn't afford to pay those mortgages. Then those mortgages were bundled

together and sold to institutional investors, pension funds, banks and people who felt that they were investing in a grade A creditworthy asset. Unfortunately, all that came apart in 2008. There were staggering losses globally. Governments spent fortunes and went into deficit to shore up the financial system so we wouldn't have another Great Depression.

I wanted to give you that background because we are facing a similar investment risk with oil and gas and coal. For those who have not followed the literature on this, I'll just note a report provided by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario a few months ago.

He talked about the need for a planetary carbon diet, or call it a carbon budget. In 2009 the global community through the United Nations adopted a ceiling that we would not go past in terms of global warming: two degrees centigrade. When you go past that, you start getting very dangerous, very unpredictable climatic events—possibly irreparable—so there's an awful lot of concern globally, in government circles and in scientific circles, that action needs to be taken to stay within that two-degree boundary.

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Now, as the Environmental Commissioner wrote, we're already about halfway to that threshold. So the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released calculations regarding a global carbon budget: How much can we burn before we go over the red line? How much can we burn before very unpredictable and dangerous events start happening? Their calculation was that, to have a reasonable chance of staying within that two-degree-centigrade increase, the global economy could only generate 1,000 gigatonnes—a gigatonne is a billion tonnes—of CO₂ for future use.

At the current worldwide rate of CO₂ release, this global budget will be exhausted in about 28 years. That's a very short time frame in the life of a society; 28 years is a very short time. I'll give you an example: The Wright brothers flew their first powered flight in the early 1900s—1903 is roughly my recollection—and 30 years later in 1933 or 1935, you had airline companies that were providing service across oceans. It's not a long time, Speaker, 30 years.

There is a big disparity between that budget—what we can emit while staying within that two-degree-centigrade ceiling—and the amount of greenhouse-gas-emitting fossil fuels that are on the books with global coal, oil and gas companies.

In 2012, the World Energy Outlook, published by the International Energy Agency—a well-respected, well-regarded international institution—estimated that the remaining global reserves of all fossil fuels in the ground—that's coal, oil and natural gas—would emit 2,900 gigatonnes of CO₂ if burned.

So if the threshold is 1,000 and what people have on the books is 2,900, then about two thirds of what's in the ground has to stay in the ground if you're going to stabilize the world's climate, if things are going to be safe or, if not safe, at least relatively stable in the future.

But that raises huge questions, Speaker, because, as you may well imagine, if an oil company says, "The value of all my reserves has to be cut by two thirds," then their stock value plummets. Anyone who has issued bonds to them realizes that those bonds may not be paid back.

Within Canada, the S&P/TSX composite index is one of the most carbon-intensive stock indices in the world. In 2013, the TSX had over 400 companies listed in the oil and gas sector, representing a market capitalization of their total value or worth—and here I'm quoting the Environmental Commissioner—of around \$400 billion to \$500 billion. The Environmental Commissioner stressed in his report that investors, pension plans and insurance companies had to start looking at these areas of investment through a climate lens, because they were putting their funds at risk by investing in these companies.

Several authoritative international organizations, including the International Energy Agency, Carbon Tracker, the United Nations and HSBC—a bank you may be familiar with, one that operates in this country and in this town—are warning investors to focus this lens quickly and act accordingly to avoid another kind of catastrophe, an economic one.

We saw in 2008 that investors sank billions—hundreds of billions—into assets that weren't worth what the vendors said they were.

We're in a situation now where oil, gas and coal companies are making a bet that the world will never act on climate change. If they're right on that bet, that's disastrous for us. If they're wrong on that bet, it's disastrous for their bottom lines, for their financial statements and for everyone whose investment portfolio is built on that edifice.

So this is not a minor or tangential issue. This is a huge risk area for us. The Bank of England is now seriously turning to the question of stranded assets and unburnable carbon given the major role that London financial markets have in financing fossil fuel investment around the world.

Last October, the British paper the Guardian reported: "The governor of the Bank of England has reiterated his warning that fossil fuel companies cannot burn all of their reserves if the world is to avoid catastrophic climate ... impacts of their decisions.

"According to reports, Carney told a World Bank seminar on integrated reporting on Friday that the 'vast majority of reserves are unburnable' if global temperature rises are to be limited to ... 2" degrees centigrade.

The governor of the Bank of England understands the kinds of risks that oil, gas and coal companies pose to the international financial system, just as subprime mortgages posed less than a decade ago. A decade ago, a number of people very smartly understood the risk and they got out of that market. There are a whole bunch of banks and investors—Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers—who got hit profoundly, and many countries took a profound hit from those unstable and risky assets.

So, Speaker, we have to understand and protect ourselves against risk in terms of our physical experience of

the world. We have to understand it in terms of controlling our cost of living and cost of energy, and we have to understand it in terms of risk, financially. At this point, I don't believe that this government understands those risks, and I am confident they are not preparing for those risks.

This bill, the one before us, is a small firewall against a bad practice, but if we're actually going to take on the challenges before us, we need continuous, substantial steps towards changing our energy system. We have to move beyond oil, gas and coal.

The good thing for us is that already the cost of conservation is far less than the cost of electricity, for example. You can effectively reduce your need for electricity services at a cost of three to six cents a kilowatt hour.

You're well aware of what it costs now when you pay your hydro bill. I got mine the other day. I did some simple arithmetic and figured out that although I had only been charged about \$40 for the actual electricity, with service delivery etc., my average price per kilowatt hour was 21 cents. To the extent that I drive down my electricity use by making my house more energy-efficient, I can spend six cents a kilowatt hour or 21 or 22 cents a kilowatt hour. It's far cheaper to invest in conservation.

But at the same time that that is true, the market for energy is changing in a profound way. In the United States, renewable energy prices are dropping dramatically. In the United States, the cost of solar power is competitive with or lower than electrical power from the grid in Hawaii and on track to be competitive in Arizona and California within the next few years.

Within five years, solar power is projected to be cheaper than grid power in about 20 American states, and banks are noticing. Banks are noticing the potential for disruption—technological disruption, economic disruption—of the existing energy systems.

Speaker, my bet is that at one point in your life you rented a video from Blockbuster Video. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think there's a very good chance that you and a lot of people in this room at one time went to Blockbuster Video and rented a movie for an evening. My bet is that you can't find one of them anywhere now because they're gone. They met Netflix—game over.

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We've seen disruptive technologies before. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when there was talk about bringing mobile phones to Ontario, I remember articles in the business press with people writing, "Is there really a market for this? Will people actually buy these things? Will they haul them around?" That was a valid question because I remember a guy in the early 1980s coming to a meeting that I was in, bringing his mobile phone and he was sort of tipped over because the battery on the phone was about the same size as a car battery, and it had this Bell rotary-phone-sized phone attached to it. But time moves on, and the mobile phone is clearly in command and landlines have lost out. Big telephone and communication companies lost out.

We have to understand that that is happening in the energy area as well with regard to renewable energy,

with new technologies and with micro-grids that are going to change the way people use energy in North America.

Earlier in 2014, Barclays bank downgraded the whole electricity sector in the United States. They looked at that sector and said, "Hmm, Blockbuster Video, we've been there. We're not going to put as much money in it as we have before."

John Spears wrote a very good article in the Toronto Star business section. He quoted Barclays, saying, "'In the 100-plus-year history of the electric utility industry, there has never before been a truly cost-competitive substitute available for grid power,' Barclays wrote.

"We believe that solar plus storage could reconfigure the organization and regulation of the electric power business over the coming decade."

"A combination of solar and storage is already competitive with grid power in Hawaii, Barclays said, and the trend will only grow.

"California could follow in 2017, New York and Arizona in 2018, and many other states soon after."

"Barclays sees near-term credit risk for utilities where solar power is gaining traction. And it sees long-term risks 'from a comprehensive reimagining of the role utilities play in providing electric power.'"

Barclays bank understands the potential scale of disruption of the electricity industry, understands the potential for solar power and other renewable technologies to make nuclear, coal, oil and gas electricity production uncompetitive.

Already in Germany, a country where there is not a lot of sunshine, solar power is producing power on houses at a cost of between nine euro cents and 12 euro cents per kilowatt hour. Remember, on our bills, we pay between seven cents and 13 cents a kilowatt hour.

Already in Abu Dhabi, which is looking at vast investment in solar power to provide electricity and to provide power for desalination, they are signing contracts for electricity provided by solar panels at less than six cents a kilowatt hour. That was in a recent report from the National Bank of Abu Dhabi done by PricewaterhouseCoopers and Cambridge University.

The reality of electricity production globally, of electricity technologies, is changing dramatically. We here in Ontario need to take advantage of that Netflix versus Blockbuster shift to redo our energy system. We need to be thinking on those terms.

It's a good thing to stop burning coal. It's a good thing to have a law prohibiting that. But, Speaker, we need to go substantially farther down the road not only to stop climate change but also to ensure that our energy system in Ontario is stable, that it is not a financial drag on the province but a financial asset, an asset that will give us an opportunity to get into global markets reckoned in the trillions, in the years to come.

One last point there: Lazard Brothers, the investment firm, did a report last year showing that the price of power from solar generation had dropped 78% over the last five years and that the levelized costs, the average

costs, from new installations in North America was seven to nine cents a kilowatt hour. There is a radical change coming in the provision of electricity, in the provision of energy, and we have to be part of that change. We have to think further and we have to think bigger if we're going to deal with climate change and if we're going to deal with economic development in this province.

I want to look for a moment at some historical parallels. I think it was roughly 1928 when Herbert Hoover was elected President of the United States. The year following, 1929, was the great stock market crash. That crash was followed by years of unemployment in the 20%-plus range across the United States. Hoover's approach was that the fundamentals were sound. He was going to tinker here or there and really just leave things the way they are and hope that it would turn out all right, which I think largely is the approach that the Canadian government is taking to climate change. I would say, with a few exceptions, it's largely the approach that the Liberal government has taken to climate change.

If my memory is correct, in roughly 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in the United States on a program of addressing substantial market failures. I just note that Lord Stern, whom I referenced earlier in my speech, refers to climate change as one of the greatest market failures in history. Well, we are faced with another market failure.

FDR looked at that market failure and mobilized the power of the American government to do a number of things. He realized that the deregulation, the conversion of the financial system in the United States to effectively a casino, where buying stocks was like playing roulette—he recognized that that had destabilized the American financial system. He recognized that not having a framework of rules to protect savers and investors was poisonous for the economy. So he brought forward legislation that changed the whole framework of finance in the United States.

He was resisted mightily. He was vilified. He was popular because he was stabilizing the economy. People could see the potential for their savings to be protected and for people to be put back to work. But he acted in a way that revamped that whole regulatory system. He invested across the United States in job creation; he invested in infrastructure. He didn't take the standstill approach of the Republicans before him.

When you have a profound failure of the market to address the issues that we face, when there is great peril to society and its structures, then you have to think much more like Roosevelt than Hoover. You have to start thinking about how systems need to be repaired so that the great issues of the day can be addressed.

I think that this government needs that with its climate thinking. I've heard the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change talk about the economic development, the business potential of developing renewable energy, and he's entirely correct. There is a huge opportunity there. But it is going to take more than closing the coal plants to realize that opportunity. It's going to need

investment in technology, in structures that go beyond oil, gas and coal.

We've had this debate in the Legislature before—frankly, since climate change was a big issue in this Legislature—back in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. I will apologize to any who had to sit through this little bit of speech before.

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But if you're going to have a strategy that works, if you're going to have a strategy that brings people onboard, the first thing you have to do is invest in those things that help contain or reduce the cost of living and put people to work. That says to me that this province needs to invest in the conservation of energy in a very substantial way. We need to be looking at cutting our use of gas, oil and coal by about 30% a decade. So 10 years from now, we should have reduced the use of those energy inputs by a third, and a third in the decade thereafter, and a third in the decade after that.

We should be assisting people to insulate their homes so they can dramatically cut their need for heating and cooling. We need to help people who are now on electric heating to move electric heating out of their lives.

You can insulate a building to the point where it needs very little energy input. Increasingly, that's a goal in Japan, where they are looking at bringing in regulations so that within the next 12 to 15 years, all new homes have to be so highly insulated, and equipped with solar panels, that they are net zero energy, that they create as much energy from their solar panels as they take from the grid, that they use very little for heating and cooling. Germany has gone a fair distance down that road, requiring net zero energy as well.

People across Ontario would benefit from a program to retrofit homes to dramatically reduce their energy consumption. Mayor David Miller, a number of years ago, put forward his tower renewal project to refurbish apartment buildings across Toronto to dramatically cut their energy use and contain costs—contain costs so that people have the money they need for food, for transportation, for clothing, for education.

We import our energy. One per cent of Ontario's oil and gas is produced in Ontario and 99% comes from outside the province. We spend somewhere, depending on the price of oil, between \$35 billion and \$50 billion a year on energy. We spend a huge amount on energy. To the extent that we replace those imports with investments we make here in Ontario, we create work in Ontario and we keep money in Ontario.

Renewable energy and conservation are capital-intensive, and we are the banking capital of Canada. We have the people who know how to do the financing. We have to stop putting all our eggs into gas, oil and coal, and put them into our construction companies here in Ontario. We need to put them into our tradespeople, we need to put them into our manufacturers, so that we here in Ontario displace the need for getting energy from Pennsylvania or Alberta or Algeria or the North Sea—it doesn't matter. We need to make the investments in

Ontario that will contain costs, that will drive costs down and that will put people to work.

A climate strategy that's based around those principles is one that can mobilize people. Just as FDR's New Deal mobilized Americans to take on the Great Depression—

Ms. Cindy Forster: You're still talking.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm still talking—we here in Ontario could mobilize the businesses, the working people and the institutions that would benefit from cleaner air, more work and stable prices. That is how we need to think about it; that is where we have to go.

In Germany, they have been engaged for about a decade—no, longer, two decades—in trying to reshape their energy system. You may or may not know this, Speaker, but we here in Ontario at the beginning of the 20th century benefited from the huge investment that Germany had made in engineering and innovation, because it was their work on long-distance transmission of power that made the transmission of power from Niagara to Toronto possible. German engineers were brought in to Ontario at the beginning of the 20th century to help make Ontario Hydro a reality.

Now today, again, globally they are the innovators. Their two largest companies, E.ON and RWE, suffered very substantial financial losses over the last few years because the market for the nuclear and coal power that they provided has been profoundly undermined. The spread of solar technology in Germany has allowed, in the middle of the day, a drop in power demand instead of the situation we have in Ontario, where we have a peak. That's been a tremendous boon to German consumers. It's been great in terms of their economic prospects but it's really changed the picture—the world—for German utilities.

What they've had to do is recognize that the world is changing around them and those two very large companies recognize that they have to become solar providers, they have to become wind power providers, so they are moving big chunks of their business into leasing solar on people's roofs. That's comparable to what SolarCity is doing in Arizona, where they are leasing solar systems and competing head to head with utilities by putting those solar panels on people's roofs. It's a big shift in the business model; it's a big shift in the energy model but it makes a huge difference in terms of your economic and ecological prospects.

I think that I've said most of what I want to say today; I know that I still have a bit of time on the clock. My hope is the government will bring this bill forward to committee relatively soon. I think that most of us agree that burning coal to make electricity has had its day and is gone.

What I hope as well is that we will soon see legislation in this chamber that not simply puts a firewall against the return of past practices but actually puts on the table initiatives that will substantially reshape our economy both for economic opportunity and for environmental opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm delighted to rise in support of the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, and to respond to the comments made by our colleague from Toronto–Danforth. I was parliamentary assistant to three Ministers of the Environment and I think, as we just heard from the member, he is someone who is extremely knowledgeable about the effects of climate change. I must say, during the time that he was our critic and I was the parliamentary assistant, I found his comments particularly enlightening. I have done so this afternoon as well.

Of course, why we've introduced this particular bill is to ensure that we never see coal used to generate electricity here in Ontario ever again.

As a former medical officer of health, I well remember when the Ontario Medical Association started compiling statistics on asthma in children and COPD—in other words, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The incidence rates in Ontario were increasing and were directly related to the type of pollution that was present here in Ontario due to coal-fired electricity generation. Of course, when our government did decide to eliminate these particular generating plants, we saw the rates come down. Fewer children, in fact, are suffering from asthma; we're seeing less lung disease than we did. Clearly, this is something that we want to preserve.

We want to ensure, should there ever be a change in government, a change in policy—heaven forbid—around this, that we have this type of legislation that ensures that we will never see coal used to generate electricity again in Ontario. I clearly support this important bill and I certainly appreciate the comments from the member for Toronto–Danforth.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very happy to speak on the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act. The comments so far have been all about how we're frustrated here in Canada that global warming and climate change are still needing to be discussed, and I think that part of the problem is that there was a lot of misleading marketing in terms of trying to sell global warming and climate change, so people are a little bit jaded in the discussion. I think that the focus really should be on what resonates with people: clean air and clean water. I think that's why it's so important that we've been talking about clean air and clean water for the last couple of weeks, in a lot of different bills. Maybe some of these bills should even be combined, because there seem to be a lot of similar discussions of an environmental nature on saving our air and water.

I just came back from visiting and learning about Taiwan. You realize just how serious the problem is when you're in Taiwan and you can't see the ocean until your feet are practically in it, because of the smog. The smog is in part because of things going on in Taiwan, but a big part of it is because of the coal plants in China, where one coal plant is being built pretty much every week. We're here talking about ensuring that no coal

plants get built here in Ontario, and hopefully in the near future we can stop coal plants in North America, but in the meantime we're purchasing goods from China, where they're being created cheaply using energy from coal plants. I think that we need to look a lot broader.

Of course, I'm happy to support this bill, and I look forward to hearing many more discussions on the topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always really interesting as a relatively new member to get the history from the member from Toronto–Danforth. He has the institutional memory of this place and how far we've come—or how far we haven't come, in some instances. I do appreciate that. I think that he's right on the money. Experts, international and national, know that the smart money is on conservation, but I think that the conversation around conservation, if you will, is also very strategically placed next to the economy.

Just a quick example: We used to have an energy retrofit program in the province of Ontario, and it addressed so many issues, like creating good jobs. It flushed out the underground economy, which has been a Groundhog Day theme in this place for a long time. But if we had such a policy in place, a citizen who knew that they were going to get a tax credit for using the certified services of an electrician to retrofit their home—that creates a good job locally. It's good for the economy. It's good for the environment, because there's conservation. It's also around consumer protection, because that's a certified worker in that home, therefore protecting the consumer. Of course, there's also the issue of safety and making sure that people know what they're doing when they are retrofitting homes.

There are progressive ideas out there. It's pushing the envelope, and pushing this government to try to actually have them embrace those ideas in a very holistic way. I think that the member from Toronto–Danforth did an excellent job of speaking to Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, but also connecting it to the need to actually accelerate the agenda on climate change and the environment. Our job as the opposition is to push that envelope, and I think that he did an excellent job today, as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2014. The act, if passed, would ensure that the health and environmental benefits of prohibiting coal use for electricity generation in Ontario are protected by legislation.

Ontario's elimination of coal-fired electricity is the single largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in North America. Becoming the first jurisdiction in North America to close coal for electricity generation is the equivalent of taking up to seven million cars off the road. Ontario's coal-fired power plants cost the people of Ontario an estimated \$4.4 billion per year in health, environmental and financial impacts.

Protecting the environment while providing clean, reliable and affordable power is part of the government's plan to invest in people, build strong infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate here in Ontario.

The proposed act reinforces a commitment to end the use of coal at existing generating facilities, and ensures that any new stand-alone generating station will not use coal. Coal-fired electricity generating facilities are major sources of air pollution. These harmful emissions are associated with major health impacts like premature death and increased hospital admissions for patients with asthma and chronic lung disease, as well as environmental damage to buildings, crops and ecosystems. Coal-fired electricity generating facilities are also large emitters of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global climate change.

Ontario's elimination of its coal-fired electricity facilities is the single largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in North America, and is a signature initiative under Ontario's climate change action plan. Ontario's coal-fired power plants cost the people of Ontario an estimated \$4.4 billion per year in health, environmental and financial impacts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all for your comments.

I now return to the member for Toronto–Danforth. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My thanks to the Minister of Community and Social Services for her kind words, and to the member from Thornhill, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from York Centre.

I agree with the Minister of Community and Social Services that it's very important that we prevent the return of coal-burning in Ontario as a source of electricity. I think that any law is going to be a firebreak, but it's beyond laws when you need to make sure that something doesn't come back at all. If there is no vacuum, if we have an energy system that provides all our energy needs, then there will never be an opening for coal. There will be no government that will try to force an opening for coal.

So I think the law is useful, just as I think a law banning fracking would be useful. But if this government, or any future government, wants to make sure that coal never makes a comeback, it needs to profoundly reshape the energy system.

I also want to pick up on the note from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. It's quite correct: When we were running programs where we gave grants and loans to homeowners to do home retrofits, and they had to provide invoices from contractors, it surfaced people, and it locked the underground economy. We need more of that. There is a huge underground economy out there, and to the extent that we can, through incentives or otherwise, put people into the above ground economy, the whole of society benefits. People get paid better wages, government collects taxes and those taxes can be used to provide services.

Speaker, I can see that there are multiple uses to an electricity or energy strategy that can benefit this society. I thank all those for their comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 9. I'll be sharing my time with the members from Beaches–East York, Scarborough Southwest and our great member from Durham.

It's been a real pleasure listening to the debate on Bill 9 in the Legislature. I think that most people who have spoken actually agree that the elimination of coal is a good thing for Ontario, and that our government, taking leadership on this position, has done a great job moving forward to eliminate coal here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I'm not an expert on environmental issues. I consider myself pretty well versed, but I'm not an expert. I would say that I would credit most of my education around this issue to two things. One, when I'm at the door talking to people in my community during campaigns or when I'm out there knocking on doors and talking to people, it's an issue that comes up all the time. People are so concerned about the environment. They want to make sure, as we go forward here in Ontario, that we have an Ontario that is built in such a way that the air remains clean, farmland remains fertile and healthy, where young people with asthma don't have to worry about these smog days that happened in the past and things like that.

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The other place that I have this conversation is in schools. When I actually get into the schools and I talk to young people about the issues that matter to them, they talk about, of course, jobs and the economy; they talk about education, of course. As young people, education seems to be an issue they always bring up because they understand the importance of this issue.

I've had the opportunity to talk to people in my community. In fact, six, seven months ago I met with a group in my community, some community-based advocates on climate change, led by Tom Cullen. He came in to see me. The group was called Citizens Climate Lobby, Canada. They talked about issues around the environment.

I know we've made some massive progress here in Ontario over the last decade. There was a report published back in 2011—the same year I was elected. It was the Air Quality in Ontario report. There were some incredible numbers that came forward. The report said that air quality has improved significantly in Ontario over the past decade. They went through some of the numbers: a 35% reduction in carbon dioxide, 41% reduction in nitrogen dioxide and a 52% reduction in sulphur dioxide. I remember talking about these issues during the campaign. I would say that Ontarians are on board with the agenda that our government had to eliminate coal plants here in the province of Ontario.

I know that during the Progressive Conservatives' time in power coal plant use went up 50% in this province. I was a young man who suffered from asthma.

I know that there were smog days back then, prior to the elimination of coal plants, that would hit Toronto; you'd see this yellow mist over the city. Those days are behind us. I remember the Asthma Society of Canada coming to see me and saying that the number of asthma cases have dropped over the last decade here in this province.

I think this piece of legislation is so important to protect our efforts over the last decade, through legislation, to prevent any form of coal plant use for energy production here in this province from going forward in the future. We need to make sure that we amend this great piece of legislation, the Environmental Protection Act, so that we can protect the citizens, the young people here in this province.

The member from York Centre talked about some of the accomplishments. What have we done over the last decade? The fact that we've eliminated the equivalent of seven million cars being on the road here in Ontario—they say that this one accomplishment by our government to eliminate the coal production here in this province is the largest reduction in any type of emissions in North America; the best thing we could have done in North America to date to reverse the effects of coal on our society.

I'll stop there, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say: I'm proud of being a Liberal, proud of our accomplishments and proud of the fact that we'll continue to go forward and protect the citizens of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a great pleasure to follow the very erudite reasoning of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I know this is not an area of immediate expertise for him but he handles himself so beautifully in this House, and it's a pleasure to follow him—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm trying to get some legacy material out of the Pan Am Games.

I am very happy to speak to this bill. Number one for me is that this bill reinforces what a great decision it was when we closed the coal-fired plants in this province. We spoke about the health impacts, how important that is and how important it has been to Ontarians. I would like to now find a way that we can go and maybe get compensation from the other coal plants on the other side of the border that continue to send smog over this way. The benefit in asthma case reduction to people who suffer, by having fewer smog days, has been tremendous.

But also it reinforces what a great decision it was as a greenhouse gas elimination measure. Closing these plants, as was said—it's one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas reduction in Ontario. Another large one was, of course, the flaring of landfill gas out of Keele Valley which went a long way to reducing greenhouse gas in Ontario, and it's very important.

But this bill, in its current form, stands as a pre-emptive strike against others maybe later down the road—a new government coming in—reopening these plants for coal purposes. Now it's a little odd for us to be doing a pre-emptive strike. It sort of suggests that we feel

some insecurity, that maybe we won't be here next government—because this government clearly would never put coal back in these facilities—but it does not allow any future government to, and we think that's very important.

More to the point, it stops others from thinking they can come into our province to maybe refurbish these old plants with coal. It just gives them a very strong signal that we are a no-coal-electricity-generation jurisdiction, so stay away. Other investors won't be coming here and trying to—and it won't even be different technologies like clean coal. We hear a lot about clean coal technologies. We didn't run on the premise of getting on to clean coal; we said no coal. That was the direction to go because you can maybe burn coal cleaner, but you're still going to have these very, very atrocious GHG impacts, and that's just not appropriate.

What we also have done is, we've opened up these four facilities as an opportunity to do different biomass electrical generation in these facilities. I believe at the Thunder Bay Generating Station, in 2015, they will start up with biomass, with wood waste from the northern communities and with straw from agricultural production. They'll be able to generate electricity, which is much needed up in that community, with very low GHGs, very low health impacts, and that's very, very important.

Other technologies associated with use of coal, like gasification and pyrolysis—we're saying no. You can't be generating electricity with it, because we're still not comfortable with the impact it will have with NO_x and SO_x. But what we do encourage and continue to allow is to use coal in manufacturing purposes and to take the spill-off heat from manufacturing, to repurpose it in electricity, steam or some other process.

So we recognize, unlike maybe the member from Toronto—Danforth, that as important as solar power and wind power are, you cannot fire cement using solar power and you cannot make steel using solar power. We still have a need in Ontario for these very important industries—the cement and the foundry industries—to have coal as a source of energy in order to produce these products. I wish we didn't, but there is no other significant alternative available. As a result, we will continue to allow coal use. We allow coal use in those facilities in a very productive way if you can actually get waste heat from them. We have two very specific exceptions in this bill—first, if you are the primary manufacturer of a product other than electricity to use waste heat in order to produce electricity both for your own use and for the grid use as a waste product. Secondly, as a different facility, if you are taking that off-heat, that off-waste steam and such, from a primary facility that uses coal, you will be able to put that into production use as well.

So this is a pre-emptive strike. It's a very important one which sends signals on how important this issue is to Ontario and to this government. I'm delighted to have a chance to speak to it today. I'll turn over my time to, I think, the member from Scarborough Southwest.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have a few minutes to discuss the bill that's in front of us here today, Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities.

I only have five minutes to speak, and I could go on for an hour here, Mr. Speaker. The gist of it for me is that less coal days, now that coal is gone actually, means less smog days. I remember years ago, we'd have a lot of smog days in the summertime, in Toronto especially. They would say, "Okay, today's a smog day. If you have asthma or if you're a senior citizen, stay indoors." Those are gone now; very few happen during the summertime. It's obvious that coal has that effect. I had a lot of people who have asthma telling me that they don't have to worry about staying indoors during the summertime.

I also want to touch on something else that coal-firing does. It really damages our atmosphere. As the previous member spoke, he touched on this issue. I think it's really important to see that climate change is a big issue.

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What's interesting is, we're taking it seriously in this government. We have a minister who deals with that, and the federal government, at some point, hopefully will become more attuned to it. But in the United States, the Republicans say there's no climate change. I read an article today in the Washington Post. There's a senator running for president. His name is Ted Cruz. He was born in Calgary, actually, and he's running for President. He came out today and basically said, "I rely on the science, and the science says there's no climate change." I guess he doesn't read articles about what's happening at the North Pole with the ice melting, and also in Antarctica, where there's a lot of ice melting. Around the world, most countries realize that there is climate change and we had better do something about it now or our children and our grandchildren are going to be suffering the consequences of what we in this generation do in our lifetime.

I also listened carefully to the member from Toronto-Danforth. In part of his speech, he spoke about how our infrastructure nowadays cannot handle all the changes that have occurred in the last 50 years, the last 20 years.

I know that I personally experienced that myself. In 2012, I was home in my basement and it started to rain. It came down really strong in Scarborough Southwest. It was almost as if the clouds decided to go into my riding and just flood my riding. In a matter of half an hour, so much rain fell that my basement was knee-high in rainwater. It wasn't very clean, either. To make a long story short, we had to redo our basement. There were several people in the area who got hit by this same effect, and all it took was a freak rainstorm.

The year after that, we had a windstorm that knocked out a lot of trees. We also had the ice storm, which caused electricity to go out all over Toronto. I can't remember in my childhood that ever happening. A lot of people were left in the dark. On Christmas Eve, I drove through the riding with my wife, and almost all the

neighbourhoods were totally black, blacked out. It was the strangest thing of all.

I think we have to do something. As has been said earlier, unfortunately, our American friends don't see it that way. They'd better see it. I mean, the President, Mr. Obama, is aware of it and he takes it seriously, but it's unfortunate that the Republicans there don't take it seriously. God forbid they elect a Republican. I won't think who will get elected—Jeb Bush—but whoever it is, they're not going to deal with this problem. It's going to get worse and worse.

I'd like to talk a lot more, but I've only got 30 seconds to wrap up here. I also wanted to say that, around the world, some countries, some islands, are starting to disappear. Some small islands in the Pacific Ocean and other places are disappearing because we have more water and it's covering them up. So I don't know what kind of science the Republicans are looking at in the United States, but the truth is that there's a lot of climate change.

This government is acting responsibly with what we're doing right now, and hopefully this will help a little bit to prevent worse climate change, which is probably going to happen in the years to come.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to be able to speak to Bill 9 this afternoon. Bill 9 is an important bit of legislation.

I was asked, "Why is there a need for Bill 9, since coal-fired generators have been eliminated, or coal-fired plants?" And I said, "This is in place to protect future generations, to protect our young people and to make sure that this never happens and we never revert back to times as they were prior to 2003."

The purpose of this act, Mr. Speaker, reinforces the commitment to end the use of coal at existing generating facilities and to ensure that any new stand-alone generation stations will not use coal. Coal-fired electricity generation facilities are major sources of air pollution. These harmful emissions are associated with major health impacts like premature death and increased hospital admissions for patients with asthma and chronic lung disease, as well as environmental damage to buildings, crops and our ecosystem.

I come from a workers' compensation background and I have seen what COPD can do to patients, to people and families that are exposed to emissions of coal and other chemicals in the workplace that affect our environment. I am speaking from some first-hand knowledge, seeing the detriment, devastation and associated costs that this adds to our economy. I wonder sometimes how our friends on the right, especially Republicans—how do you put a cost on the health of humans and on human life? That baffles me. I'm always at a loss to see how anybody could support that.

This government has taken steps to eliminate coal from our economy and from our province. In 2012, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from coal electricity were 93% and 88% lower, respectively, than

they were in 2003, so I commend our government for taking steps to eliminate coal in this province. In 2003, coal accounted for 25% of our generation; in 2012, coal-fired generation made up less than 3% of Ontario's total electricity generation.

The last of Ontario's coal plants, the Thunder Bay Generating Station, stopped burning coal ahead of schedule in 2014. This station is being converted to use advanced biomass as a fuel for electricity generation.

This government is concerned about the potential health, environmental and financial costs associated with the use of coal at a stand-alone generating station. Under the Environmental Protection Act, the maximum fine for a corporation for a specified offence is \$6 million, and \$250,000 for an additional offence.

Clean coal technology research has been under way in the US, Canada and Europe for many years. However, these technologies do not eliminate the harmful pollutants of coal, and they are not commercially viable. You may hear, "Oh yes, technology has advanced and we can use that." No, Mr. Speaker. It eliminates some, but there is still potential harm to our society as a whole.

Again, our government has taken steps to ban this, and we are one of the only jurisdictions that has done so. I am so proud to stand here and be a part of a government that put the health of Ontarians first, ahead of profits.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a few comments in today's debate. I recall probably 20 or 25 years ago, when the aforementioned smog days that people have referred to were quite common. One of the most compelling issues about that was that, at the time, 50% of the particulates making up our air quality came from the US. So there was a recognition by the government of the day, which was the Progressive Conservative government, that there was a role for us to play, despite the 50% problem that we faced.

At that time, we made the decisions to decommission coal-fired generating stations. The first one of those decommissionings was that of Lakeview in—I don't know whether it's Etobicoke or Mississauga, but—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Etobicoke.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Etobicoke? Thank you. In the election of 2003, the announcement had been made and the decommissioning process had been recognized and had begun. I found myself, as a candidate in that election, having a Liberal candidate oppose me with the fact that they were going to have the coal-fired furnaces closed by 2007. I went to the then Minister of the Environment and I said, "How am I supposed to say that it will be by 2014 and my opponent is saying 2007? Why is there such a discrepancy?" Well, it was explained to me very easily that the experts had told us 2014. When the government of the day became the Liberals—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro:—they kept the 2007 date for a while—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for—oh, now you hit me. You got up to—

Interjection: Timmins—James Bay.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's okay, Speaker. I can't remember names. So if you don't remember a riding, we're doing okay.

I just want to say a couple of things in this rotation in the two minutes. First of all, each political party has taken pretty well the same position over a number of years when it comes to coal. All of us had a goal to get rid of coal by 2017, I think was the original date, or 2014. I can't remember the exact date. So when I hear members across the way saying, "I'm so glad that my government did it"—well, excuse me, I was here before you guys were government, and I remember some coal plants being closed down by the nasty Mike Harris government, and certainly it was a direction that the nasty NDP government was doing before that.

Everybody in this House, on all sides, understood that coal was an issue and that we had to have as a goal the reduction of coal. The real question was, when we do that, how are we going to replace the power that coal generates, which is pretty inexpensive compared to a whole bunch of other forms of energy out there? I just want to say that this is something that we've all done.

The other thing is, it's interesting that we're bringing legislation now. After we've closed down all the coal plants, we're passing legislation in this House preventing the use of coal, which seems to be kind of backwards in the sense that I'm sure the government's got a whole bunch of stuff on the order paper that they'd like to talk about, that they could be talking about. Instead, we're debating a bill that, quite frankly, is a bit moot. We got rid of the coal plants. I think we can all take a bow on that. We found new means of energy to replace it, although be it more expensive; there's no question about that. But we're doing legislation that, quite frankly, is not going to change the outcome of anything other than make us feel good, that we ban coal after we got rid of coal.

I just say to the government across the way, I would hope that we would be able to use our time in debate on something a little bit more pressing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I didn't think late on a Thursday afternoon that I would have the pleasure of standing and doing two minutes on something that has been talked about for many, many, many years—at least since I have been here—about coal generation stations and clean air, one versus the other.

I have enjoyed, I have to say, the various comments made by the various speakers, especially Toronto—Danforth, who is well conversant with the issue; and my friend here, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport;

Beaches—East York; Scarborough Southwest; and Durham as well; and of course, the member from the north—sorry. That's not fair.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Timmins—James Bay.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Timmins—James Bay.

Speaker, let me say that I remember when we said we were going to start to close all coal-fired generation stations, and we did that. Some things that the member from Timmins—James Bay said: "You have already eliminated it. What do you need this for?" Well, we want to make sure that never again are we going to be subject or put our people to be subject to what they were subjected to years ago. We want clean air now. So those stations are closed. Keep them closed so never again will we have to inhale dirty air. It may cost a few dollars more, but let me say that it's doing wonderful things for our people, especially our young people, and it is the right thing to do.

So whatever it takes, if this is going to take some other time to do it, well, let's do it, but at least we're sending a clear message that in the future we are going to have clean air.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to give some comments on the bill, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act.

We just heard from the minister responsible for seniors. I would just remind everybody that in 2003 he was part of the Liberal team during that election campaign that promised to close coal plants in 2007, while the PCs said they would close them in 2014 and that it couldn't be done so quickly. Here we are in 2015, and we all know that the plants were closed in 2014, so we know who has the crystal ball: It's on this side of the House.

As a fairly new member—I guess I'm still one of the rookies here—I've done quite a bit of research. Everybody keeps giving me more research, piling it on my desk. I've looked at some pretty big portfolios and projects—Ornge, eHealth, MaRS, gas plants—and everything doesn't seem to be managed very well. I feel that there are much more important things that we could be discussing, since the coal plants are already closed. I don't know that we really need a separate bill—maybe an addendum to an existing bill—to say that we shouldn't open new coal plants, which we know we wouldn't open anyhow. Maybe this is considered kind of a distraction. Maybe this is a feel-good bill.

But of course we in the PC caucus support not reopening coal plants, and we support initiatives to help people lower their energy bills, because the green energy policy was another big mismanaged portfolio. Mr. Speaker, I can recall working up in Keswick, where people were living in trailers that they thought were homes because they were fixed up. We all know how fast our car gets cold when we turn off the engine, and these people—what their energy bills must be for tiny little

houses that are really trailers. So we have a lot more to do in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We now return to the member for Beaches—East York. You have two minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to respond on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the MPPs from Durham and Scarborough Southwest.

Let me thank the member from York—Simcoe for remembering about the smog days that once were and how those are now behind us and for a bit more of the history of the Lakeview, Mississauga, plant and its closing.

Also, the member from Timmins—James Bay—I appreciate his great leadership. He has reminded us how all parties have come forward, and it's fantastic that we're now at a stage where we can all celebrate that together.

But this is hardly a moot bill, and I think the minister responsible for seniors made it absolutely crystal clear for us why it is not moot for us to be discussing this here today. That's because the minister of senior services has been here a long time. He's seen the flip-flops. He knows how governments change and how a policy that was here, with a new government, can be there. I think we should appreciate that sage guidance and advice that we're getting from him about how important it is to move forward with this bill.

I further would like to say to the member from Thornhill: It's wonderful in hindsight to be able to look into a crystal ball. I'm sure it was the same crystal ball that was used during the campaign to create a million jobs in Ontario—a million jobs, and there were only 450,000 unemployed at the time. We all wondered, "How are they going to do it?" She must have looked into the crystal ball and said, "Well, we'll just fire 100,000; that's a start. We'll get closer to it."

Hon. Steven Del Duca: They were standing in a hall of mirrors.

Mr. Arthur Potts: The hall of mirrors—there's many crystal balls.

This has been an excellent debate. I much appreciate the opportunity to participate in it. This is a pre-emptive strike, absolutely, but it's also a reminder to all investors that if you want to do business in generating power in Ontario, good distributed energy is the way to go. That's why we are building responsible gas-powered plants, which are cleaner than coal, all around the province to replace it. Distributed generation is important to a good, healthy smart grid system, and this bill reminds everyone about that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Lundi 30 mars 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 mars 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome Mark Milunsky from Thornhill, vice-president of the very infamous Beverley Glen Ratepayers Association. Welcome.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome some of my guests in the east gallery: my good friend Mano Kanagamany, and he's accompanied by a visitor from south India, Mr. P.V. Raghavendran, a photojournalist and well-known cinematographer.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce the grandparents of page captain Cameron Johnson, David and Joyce Johnson. Welcome.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, I'm pleased to welcome some folks from the Public Affairs Association of Canada. Board members who are sitting in the members' galleries today include President John Capobianco, Events Co-Chair Rick Hall and Membership Chair Harvey Cooper. I encourage all MPPs to attend this evening's reception, to be held in room 228 from 5:30 to 7:30. Welcome.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Aiden Campbell, our page from Simcoe-Grey, has his family here again today: his mom, LeAnne Campbell; his dad, Trent Campbell; grandfather Bob Campbell; grandmother Betty Campbell; and his brother, Nolan Campbell. Welcome. I'm looking forward to having lunch with them.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Page Jessie Meanwell, from Hamilton Centre, is actually the page captain today. Her family is with us today in the gallery. I want to welcome them on behalf of the Legislative Assembly: mother Frances Cockburn; father Charles Meanwell; grandmother Elizabeth Cockburn; sister Caitlin Meanwell; and cousin Gavin Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's my honour to welcome the family of page captain Ian Harvey—who's from my riding of Etobicoke Centre—here today: his mother, Janice Harvey; father Bill Harvey; grandmother Mary Kray; grandfather Stan Kray; his aunt, Laura Latimer; his uncle, Paul Latimer; and family friend, Tracy Bowie. They're in the members' gallery this morning, and I ask us all to welcome them.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin-Caledon is well represented in the Speaker's gallery today. Page captain Ranen has invited his mother, Tanja Oomen; his father, Joe

Danckert; his brother, Kiefer; his grandmother, Johanna; and his aunt, Ingrid. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like welcome Tim McKinnon, who's the chairperson of the General Motors plant in Niagara.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome the grandparents of our page Alycia Berg to Queen's Park this morning: Barbara and Lloyd Berg.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to recognize Rosemary Shiller and Ed Shiller, who are here in the gallery with us. They're the proud parents of Jennifer Shiller, who works in our office.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to welcome Greg Moffatt, chairperson of Oshawa Unifor Local 222, and Ron Svajlenko, president of Local 222, here today.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to recognize Robin Singh. His daughter is a page in this session. He actually worked for ServiceOntario; I'm not sure where he's based now, but I really want to welcome him.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I would like to welcome Jerry Dias, who's the president of Unifor. He was here today holding a press conference.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the Speaker's gallery we have with us the interns from the Manitoba legislative internship program, who are here to meet with our legislative interns. We're glad you're here. A welcome for Manitoba.

Also joining us today in the Speaker's gallery is a former Premier, the sixth Premier of Newfoundland, serving from 1996 to 2000. Mr. Brian Tobin is here with us.

We also have in the Speaker's gallery today visiting us the British consul general in Toronto, Mr. Kevin McGurgan. Please join us in welcoming our consul general.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, when you were introducing the former Premier from Newfoundland and Labrador, you forgot to mention that he now lives in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. I have the great honour of working for him every single day. Welcome to Queen's Park, Premier Tobin.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure he'll want his sidewalks fixed.

Today—not to make excuses, but I'm partially under the weather and my voice might not be heard.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): But that's not the point. My patience will be thinner.

It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Premier, your government has recently been holding consultations on Ontario's climate change strategy, which is really just a cover for your upcoming carbon tax. A price on carbon will increase the cost of everything from gas to groceries. Premier, we already have received over 13,000 signatures on the PC "Stop the Carbon Tax" petition.

Premier, my question for you is this: Will you listen to the people of Ontario and say no to a carbon tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is going to want to weigh in on this, but I'm going to take a crack at it to start out with. I think that it is not underestimating the issue to say that climate change is a defining issue of our time. There is probably no issue that is more important for all of us to tackle.

I would go further to suggest that this is not a partisan issue. This is an issue that is going to affect all of us, that is going to affect our children and our grandchildren, and we have done a lot in Ontario. By shutting down the coal-fired plants, we have made an enormous, enormous step forward.

But the fact is that there is more to be done. There is more that we have to do if we're going to be responsible to generations to come, and we are going to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: Speaker, I heard the Premier say there's no issue they want to tackle—I think she meant to say "tax," because really and truly Ontarians already have some of the highest energy costs in North America and a carbon tax will only further drive jobs out of this province.

Premier, it is unacceptable that your Minister of Energy has nonchalantly stated, "Businesses ... come and go." But, Premier, we definitely don't want a carbon tax to speed up that process, driving jobs out of this province, especially when other jurisdictions such as BC saw a carbon tax increase the cost to farmers an extra \$4,300. And in Australia it raised energy by 9%.

Premier, will you heed the advice of the PC Party of Ontario and commit to not implementing a carbon tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the member opposite might look at other jurisdictions, even in this country. She might look at BC; she might look at Quebec; she might look at Alberta, and see that there are other jurisdictions in this country that have moved forward responsibly.

She then might look at other jurisdictions internationally. She might look at Sweden. She might look at where the opportunities have been increased because there has been a regime of carbon pricing.

But apart from all of that, the fact is that we cannot sit idle. We cannot pretend that this is not an issue. I can tell you that there are people in every one of our ridings who

are concerned about the fact that they're seeing changing weather patterns. They know that they don't have a federal government that is moving—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. I'm getting order so she can finish and I can hear.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, they know that they don't have a federal government that is putting in place a framework and that it is up to the provincial governments to work together to make sure that we take responsible steps for future generations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: Ontarians are concerned about the cost of living and the cost of doing business going through the roof. In last year's election, the only thing you said to the people of Ontario about a carbon tax is that you won't implement one.

Premier, as the second of our five budget asks, will you stick by what you said to the people of Ontario and commit, in your 2015 budget, that you will not put another burden on taxpayers' shoulders by levying a carbon tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, Alberta—I want to say it really slowly—Alberta has a price on carbon introduced by the same party she's affiliated with. British Columbia, which has seen some of the most dynamic per capita GDP growth in Canada, has a price on carbon. Quebec has a price on carbon. California has a price on carbon. New York has a price on carbon. Massachusetts has a price on carbon. Mexico has a price on carbon. China has a price on carbon. Germany—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Could the member explain her party's position, how she reduces GHG emissions, and how she thinks that Ontario can be the only jurisdiction to reduce them without a price on carbon? Because that's fantasy.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. We're just coming off one of the coldest winters on record, and the consequences of your reckless hydro policies are more apparent than ever. Most Ontarians are struggling because the cost of energy is rising much faster than their ability to pay. This is because they're paying 14 cents a kilowatt hour plus all the extras you slap on, like the global adjustment, debt retirement charge and distribution costs for on-peak electricity. When your government took office, they were paying 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

Premier, the current chaos in the energy system is all on you. The only way to fix it is to change direction. Will

you turn away from your failed energy policies, which have damaged our economy and caused untold misery to ratepayers, and commit to making Ontario once again an energy-competitive jurisdiction?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say to the member opposite that the fact is, when we came into office, the electricity system in this province was degraded. It had been neglected. It was in no shape to deliver reliable power to people across this province.

Some 10,000 kilometres of transmission line have been rebuilt and repaired, because that party did not put the money into infrastructure that was needed. So we have done that work. We have made those investments. We are aware that there's a cost associated with that. I hope that the member opposite is very pleased at the plan that we announced last week—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, as will the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —the Ontario Electricity Support Program, that in fact addresses the fact that people on low income are struggling in many cases, and they need a break, and that's what that program will provide.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Premier, you know that the primary reason hydro bills are going up is because of your Green Energy Act and its intermittent, unreliable and expensive energy.

Your announcement last week about the stipend you'll be giving to low-income energy consumers is nothing more than a shell game. Almost every ratepayer is struggling to pay their bills, because under your watch, hydro bills have gone up and more than tripled since 2003.

People have no faith in your ability to administer this sliding-scale shell game. As the Ombudsman investigation clearly shows, your team can't even get a simple residential bill right, even though you've wasted \$2 billion on your smart-meter fiasco.

Premier, how much more bureaucracy will be needed to administer this new convoluted program, and how much more will that cost the energy ratepayers of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Ontario Electricity Support Program is designed specifically to help people who have the lowest income in the province and who are struggling. I think that is exactly the kind of support that needs to be put in place.

The fact is, we took a dirty electricity system and we shut down the coal-fired plants. We've rebuilt the system. We've made the investments that were needed, so we're dealing with a clean energy regime now in Ontario.

The other thing that we've done is we have renegotiated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark will come to order. You're inches away; I can hear.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Jim, do something about that.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've renegotiated agreements like the Samsung agreement that will actually save \$3.7 billion. We've changed the domestic content rules. We are working with Quebec on an off-peak/on-peak agreement that will allow us to get clean power from Quebec at a time when we need it and send our power to them when they need it. So we've taken a system that was not reliable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, you're always congratulating yourself on how egalitarian you are, but the hydro system you've created is anything but fair and equal. As revealed by the sunshine list, salaries for staff in the energy sector are rising sharply. Some 77% of Hydro One employees and 80% of OPG employees made over \$100,000 last year. At the same time, ratepayers have seen their salaries flatline, and 300,000 people in the manufacturing sector don't have a paycheque at all because of your economic mismanagement and Ontario's anemic growth since your party took power.

Premier, it is your duty to ensure that there is balance in the system between the remuneration of employees and the consumers' ability to pay. Ratepayers cannot afford to wait any longer. Will you live up to your own rhetoric, scrap the Green Energy Act and restore some semblance of balance to our energy system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: For goodness' sake, Mr. Speaker, the people he's talking about are the very people who run our nuclear plants. Do you really think that that's where we should go in terms of reducing salaries? The people who run our nuclear plants? When we go to bed at night, we want to make sure that we have the best people in the world running our energy system.

Right now, when you look at people like Tom Mitchell, considered the best at doing the kind of work that he does in the world—we owe it to the people of this province to ensure that we have the best-quality people running organizations like OPG, to ensure that those nuclear plants are safe, for all Ontarians to be able to know that we have one of the best records in the world when it comes to nuclear. That is not the place to start when it comes to cutbacks. This government will not in any way sacrifice safety for the sake of anything with regard to cutting back like the member wants—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier be introducing a salary cap on public CEOs? And what will that cap be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite knows, although she voted against the act, the accountability act will bring in hard caps for senior executives in the broader public sector. I think that the member opposite recognizes that.

In fact, my understanding is that she also understands that there would be some exceptions. In fact, an amendment that the NDP brought forward was this: "A compensation framework may provide that specified designated executive positions may receive compensation in excess of the limit...." So I think the member understands that having hard caps is very important and having a range of salaries at all of those levels is important, and I'm sure that she will work with us on making sure that those are put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Energy bills have tripled, and energy CEOs are turning into millionaires in this province. Students in Ontario pay the highest tuition in the country, and there are university presidents who are just shy of making a million dollars. The Premier is firing nurses, and there are hospital CEOs making over \$800,000 a year. Can the Premier justify those salaries to Ontarians who can't pay their hydro bills, to Ontarians paying student loans for decades after they finish their post-secondary studies or to Ontarians with a loved one who's stuck waiting for the care that they so desperately need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the leader of the third party understands that we have to tackle all of those challenges. It's absolutely imperative that we support people who need services in this province and we do that in the best way possible. I know she also knows that we agree that there need to be caps on CEO salaries. That's why we have moved on that. That's why we brought the accountability act into place. Those caps are going to be put in place, but there will be a range.

In terms of the expertise that is needed in particular sectors, we also have to understand that that's always going to be the case: There will be specific expertise that's needed in sectors. As the Minister of Economic Development was saying, in terms of running our nuclear plants, in terms of the technical expertise that's needed, we're going to have to make sure that we have the right people doing those jobs, and that we pay them adequately but not exorbitantly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals have been promising to cap CEO salaries for over a decade in this province, but they have voted against capping CEO pay three times in this Legislature. When is the Premier going to put our money where her mouth is and tell the public sector CEOs that enough is enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have to say I'm a bit mystified, because we actually have passed legislation that will take exactly those steps. The NDP did not support Bill 8. We passed Bill 8, and I'm very pleased that it received royal assent on December 11, 2014.

We are moving forward on executive compensation. We are being thoughtful about it and we are moving forward to collect the information, creating salary bands including hard caps. This work is under way now. We're well on our way, and I'm just a bit astonished the leader of the third party doesn't even know that we passed that legislation.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Nurses are being fired across Ontario. Health Quality Ontario says that more than half of Ontarians can't actually see their doctor when they get sick. But hospital CEOs are making over \$800,000 a year.

Putting health care first means making some tough choices and setting some priorities. Why is the Premier choosing hospital CEOs when she should be choosing patients?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we're not. The fact is that there are thousands more doctors in this province. I think 96% of people have access at this point to a primary care physician, and we've made a commitment to that being 100%. There are 24,000 more nurses in this province than when we came into office.

The health care system is undergoing a transformation. There's no doubt about that. More care is moving into the community. There's no doubt about that, and that is a transition.

But the fact is, we have put in place legislation that will cap salaries. That legislation has passed; the NDP did not support it, but nonetheless, that legislation is going forward and those caps will be put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Our hydro bills are paying the CEO salaries of public hydro companies. Two executives particularly are making over \$1 million each. I think these priorities are backwards. The hydro system should be working for us, not the other way around, and as long as Ontarians own our hydro companies, we can say that enough is enough, even though this Liberal government seems to think that the status quo is fine.

If the Premier sells off Hydro One, Ontarians lose. We might not have any idea how much of our rates are going straight to the executive salaries. If Liberals sell it off, Ontarians can't say enough is enough to those executives. Privatizing Hydro One might be good for executives but it's bad for ratepayers. Will the Premier pull the plug on selling Hydro One so CEO salaries will stay transparent in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's be clear about what the leader of the third party is actually asking. She's saying stop the review of the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario. She's saying don't reinvest the money that we might be able to realize, the benefit we might be able to realize—don't reinvest that in infrastructure that's needed for the 21st century. And she's saying don't build transit and transportation infrastructure—roads and bridges that are needed across this province—because

she actually doesn't agree with making any change that would allow us to do that.

I say to the leader of the third party, that is not where we're going to go. We are going to make those investments. We ran on that plan. It is the right plan for the future of this province. It is the right plan for the economic development of communities across this province, and we're going to make those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier is cutting health care, she's closing schools and she's selling off public hydro companies, all because she says the cupboard is bare. If the cupboard is bare, why are there millionaires on the sunshine list?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would ask the leader of the third party how she construes the building of 725 schools since we've been in office and repairs to 700 more as closing schools. The fact is, across this province we have invested in infrastructure, in hospitals, in schools—in the renovation and consolidation of schools that allow for programs to be delivered in a way that makes the best sense for kids in communities across Ontario. We've worked with local school boards in order to do that, and those decisions have been made.

They're not easy decisions. I understand that. Every time there's a change—I've been a school trustee. I know how difficult it is to make a change in the configuration of schools in a province. But the fact is, we have to do it in the most thoughtful way possible. We have to work to create hubs where we can, and we have to make sure that kids have access, from kindergarten right through post-secondary, to the best programs in the world.

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WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, in 2009, your WSIB slush fund was first flagged as under-performing and returning little value. These suspicions were raised once again in 2012, concerning the value of this fund, and again last year, a KPMG audit recommended that the program be shut down, as it provides zero value for money.

Minister, last week you told this House that by 2016, these programs will be corrected. We know that the Premier's chief of staff, Tom Teahen, made almost \$350,000 at the WSIB last year. Is he the reason it takes seven years to shut down a slush fund in Liberal Ontario?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: On this side of the House, we take worker health and safety very, very seriously. We bring a business practice to it that I think is something we can be proud of. This is a program that was brought in in 1990. It's been here for a long time, and funds several organizations. It funds the OFL. They help training on claims management for those people, those organizations, so that they can help the workers who

need to avail themselves of the system—the navigation skills or the assistance to get through that system.

In 2012, shortly after new leadership took over, we conducted an audit, like we should, on programs in government. We found that there were some improvements we could make. We implemented those improvements. We told the employers that this would be a transition year and we're implementing it in 2016.

We've handled this responsibly. The WSIB has handled it responsibly. I think that Ontarians should have confidence in this system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the minister: Since questioning your WSIB slush fund to the Ontario Federation of Labour, I've received several letters from union leaders across the province. When I receive form letters from union leaders rather than real stories from injured workers, I have no doubt that this program is nothing more than a slush fund. Not one beneficiary of this program has contacted my office. Many union officials have, but not one single injured worker.

Minister, since I haven't received a single letter of support for the grant from injured workers, I ask you: Have you received any letters of support from injured workers, and if so, will you share them with me in this House?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, as I mentioned in the previous answer, this is a grants program that is managed by the WSIB. It funds those organizations in this province that assist us in dealing with the issues that surround injured workers who return to work or train for new employment.

When I hear about the Randy Hillier slush fund, that is not what this is. The Randy Hillier slush fund may be something else that I'm unaware of, but after the audit was conducted, we made changes to the system. It was obviously some changes that could be made to improve things for injured workers in the province of Ontario.

Since the Auditor General's report in 2009, we've seen a transformation at the WSIB. It's a good-news story that we share with the people of the province of Ontario, because we know that injured workers, employers and those employees are now getting the services they should under this plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Some of the repartee I've been hearing is getting dangerously close to getting extremely personal. The advice I've given since the beginning, and will adhere to today, is that you address individuals in this place by either their title or their riding. That tends to help.

The second part to that is that it's also getting dangerously close to making accusations that would be unparliamentary. Stay away from it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'm not asking for any comments from anybody right at this moment.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. The Premier seems to think that if she buries her head in the sand and refuses to acknowledge that the bribery scandal in Sudbury exists, if she says over and over that what happened out there doesn't matter in here, if she wishes for it to go away hard enough, she will make it true—but ignoring an issue does not make it go away.

My question is quite simple: When did the Premier call, first, Mr. Gerry Lougheed, then Mrs. Pat Sorbara, in order for them to call Mr. Andrew Olivier to offer him a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what I have actually said, just to clarify to the member opposite, is that there is an investigation going on. That investigation is taking place outside of this House, Mr. Speaker. I've been very clear in my statements in public. I've been very clear in this House over and over again on the decisions that I made. We're very happy to have the current member for Sudbury with us on this side of the House. I will continue to work with the authorities in the investigation outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, Speaker, someone had to tell Mr. Gerry Lougheed to call Andrew Olivier on behalf of the Premier and offer him a job. I know Mr. Lougheed well enough to know that it is not his style to do that kind of call without strict directions.

Mr. Lougheed reported the results of his call to Mr. Olivier, then someone had to tell Mrs. Sorbara that she needed to follow up, which she did. She called Mr. Olivier and said, "You've now been directly asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside to allow Glenn to have the opportunity, basically have the opportunity uncontested." The OPP said, these "references to the Premier's authority threatens the appearance of the government's integrity."

Mrs. Sorbara and Mr. Gerry Lougheed's actions call the integrity of the government into question. My question, Speaker: Why is the Premier letting that happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I remind the member opposite, as the Premier just did, that there is an active investigation that is going on outside this Legislature. The Premier, by no means, is avoiding the issue; what she's doing is respecting the process, a process that is independent from what happens in the Legislature or what the government does. I think, Speaker, we should all respect that process. The member opposite knows very well that the Premier or any member of the government cannot interfere or interject in the process. In fact even the Chief Electoral Officer said in his report, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

Speaker, as I said before, none of us here in this Legislature are prosecutors or judges. They are independent

roles. We should respect those roles and let those individuals do their job.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, constituents in my riding of Sudbury are concerned about changes to Ontario's moose hunt that your ministry is proposing. An article in a local newspaper stated, "Ontario hunters are up in arms over a plan to shorten the moose season, which they argue goes far" above and "beyond what's necessary to sustain viable populations."

Speaker, moose hunting is a proud part of our heritage and an important part of Ontario's economy. In fact, recreational fishing and hunting provide more than \$4 billion to our economy each year. Many small businesses in our province, several of which are in my riding, rely on hunting and fishing tourism to support their economic viability.

Minister, my constituents are concerned about what impact these changes will have on their lives and their livelihoods. Through you, Mr. Speaker: Could the minister explain to my constituents why his ministry is proposing changes to the moose hunt?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question.

He's right, Speaker, there are a number of people and groups out there who are alarmed by what's coming forward, but I would say, in fact, that many of the people who are most affected by the changes we are bringing forward are the people who get it the most, who understand that the sustainability of this population is what's most important.

In fact, I would say that in my community of Thunder Bay there are people who are telling me absolutely to shut the hunt down. Speaker, it has taken years to get to this situation, and it is going to take us some time to fix it, but I'm not going to kick the can down the road. We need to make some decisions. We need to make sure that we get this absolutely right. What these groups and these people don't agree on is what steps need to be taken to fix this particular problem. But what these people and these groups agree on is that steps need to be taken.

I'm going to take those steps. New numbers are in; they continue to be not good. There's more coming forward, but we have to make some decisions. We have to fix a problem that's taken years to create, and we're going to get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the minister for recognizing the important role that the moose hunt plays in our economy and in the north.

In the Sudbury area, tourist outfitters rely on their ability to provide a variety of hunting and fishing opportunities. Outfitters like Lang Lake Resort in nearby Espanola, for example, rely on moose-hunting tourism for their business. These outfitters bring tourists from all parts of the province into the Sudbury area and support our local economy.

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With these changes to moose season, businesses and members of my community want to know how these changes will impact them. Everyone agrees that we need to ensure our moose population is sustainable for future generations, but I'm hearing from some of my constituents that there may be other opinions about how to move forward with the moose hunt.

Hunters, tourist outfitters and the public all want to ensure that we are making the right changes to Ontario's moose hunt. Can the minister talk about how he's going to protect the economic interests of our moose population—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I thank the member for the question. In the phase 1 consultation, most of the work that we did focused on the resident hunter and the tourist outfitter. The member is very correct in saying that. That's one of the criticisms that the ministry has historically received: We're only looking at the tag allocation for the resident hunter and for the tourist outfitter.

Phase 2 will change that. I've made a very clear commitment to the groups that are interested in this issue that the phase 2 consultations, that will begin very soon, will look at other opportunities to sustain this population that don't just manage the hunter.

In the phase 1 piece that we did, we worked very hard last year to ensure that tourist outfitters—those people who have made a private sector investment, whose livelihood depends on this to a large degree—weren't negatively affected. We kicked the numbers back a number of times to the ministry and said it wasn't good enough.

The flying has been done; we've invested in aerial moose inventories. The numbers are not good. There's more information coming soon. Phase 2 will take a broader look at how we're going to try to sustain this population.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. On April 15, 2014, the Premier filed a lawsuit against the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook and me for questioning her involvement in the cover-up of deleted emails in the gas plants scandal.

The next day, on April 16, 2014, the members for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and Simcoe North referred to the suit as a SLAPP, or nuisance suit, during debate on the public participation act. That same day, the anti-SLAPP bill was also sent to die in committee.

At the time, the bill had a retroactivity clause. Former Attorney General John Gerretsen said that "the rule will apply to suits ... before the bill comes into force, thus allowing for dismissal of strategic litigation...."

Did the Premier kill the anti-SLAPP bill the day after she launched the lawsuit because it would affect her attempt to muzzle the opposition?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, we didn't, and I know the Attorney General is going to want to speak to this. I think the member opposite knows that retroactive rule-making is not something that is seen favourably by the courts. It's not something that we have engaged in.

To the issue of the suit that I brought, I have been very clear all along that I believe that debating substance is important. I think debating the truth is important. But allegations that are completely baseless, that are not based in any accurate assessment of a situation—I don't think that is right. I have said all along that I would always debate the truth, but untruth, I'm not interested in debating.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's quite a statement. It's also quite a coincidence that the lawsuit was launched on April 15. She decided to kill that bill off on the 16th. The previous two incarnations of the bill had the retroactivity clause until it didn't suit the Premier.

On December 1, 2014, the public participation act was reintroduced again, for the third time, without this clause. John Gerretsen says about this omission, "Obviously the bill is weaker," and "it probably shouldn't be gone."

The Premier must know how this looks. It appears that she killed her own law for her own political gain. This is on the heels of her role in the cancelled gas plants and, most recently, the Sudbury bribery scandal. She thinks she's above the law, and if the law doesn't suit her, she changes it. Is there any length this Premier of Ontario won't go, to cling to power?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would say to the member opposite that we are very committed to the anti-SLAPP legislation; we have been all along. The retroactivity, I think, was a concern.

In terms of the other issue, if the two members would just apologize, the whole thing would go away. That's all we're talking about. All I was concerned about was that there was a completely unfounded allegation. The accusations were made on the eve of an election. They were completely untrue; they were a complete fiction. All I'm saying is: Just apologize; retract those, and the whole thing goes away.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Last week, we asked the Premier to provide a guarantee that hydro rates wouldn't go up as a result of her plan to privatize Hydro One. We didn't get an answer. In fact, the Minister of Energy said last week that he had no idea how Hydro One would be managed if it was privatized.

If the government has no idea how Hydro One would be managed, how can the government prevent costs from going up?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't have the transcript in front of me, but I think the Minister of Energy was probably saying that you didn't have any idea how Hydro One would be managed.

What I know is that this line of questioning intensified on the very day that we announced the Ontario Electricity

Support Program, which is a program to give some relief to the lowest-income citizens in this province, the lowest-income residents. I would have thought that the NDP would have been concerned and would have been supportive of such a program.

I know they're not supportive of making a change in our assets. I know they're not supportive of investing in transportation infrastructure, transit, roads and bridges across the province. I don't know why they're not supportive of that, but they're not supportive. But I would have thought that they would have been supportive of a program that would help the lowest-income residents in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last week we learned that the CEO of Hydro One last year earned more than three and a half times as much money as the Premier herself. The government has done a poor job at controlling executive salaries, but if Hydro One is privatized, the government will have even less control over executive salaries and less control over hydro costs.

How can the government control executive salaries and hydro costs when it's giving up oversight and control with this misguided privatization scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This whole gambit and this whole debate would be much more rational if the NDP actually had a plan for any of this, if they had a plan to build transit, if they had a plan for the electricity system. The National Post on March 5, 2014, talked about the so-called energy plan that the NDP put forward. The National Post said that the NDP's energy plan "veers straight into crazy talk."

The fact is that there is no consistency in terms of what the NDP is asking for. They haven't put forward a coherent plan, neither for an electricity system that would be reliable and affordable, nor for investments in transit that would give us the 21st-century infrastructure we need across the province. Until they have those plans, it's pretty hard to debate with any kind of credibility.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, we have one of the highest percentages of seniors of any riding in Canada. I've heard from many of those seniors, and they've expressed to me how important it is that they have access to home and community care as they age.

I've also spoken to many people in my riding who are not seniors but who are caring for seniors: people who are caring for their elderly parents but also caring for their children and raising a family, often with limited resources. They've asked us for help to ensure that they can access the home and community care they need to support their aging parents.

To address this challenge, it's obviously important that we continue to deliver high-quality home and community care for the people of Ontario. Minister, could you

specifically outline what work your ministry is doing to ensure access to high-quality community and home care in communities like Etobicoke Centre?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke Centre for this very important question. I'm pleased to tell you how our government is improving health care for seniors with complex health conditions across Ontario. I was pleased to be at Toronto Rehab last week to make an announcement that our government is investing more than \$40 million in specialized rehabilitative care right across the province to help our seniors recover from illnesses and injuries so that they can continue to live independently at home. This is a program called assess and restore.

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Fortunately, most of Ontario's 1.9 million seniors are healthy and use the health care system only occasionally. But a small number of our seniors living in the community—about 150,000, or 8%, of them—have complex care needs, and this program is geared specifically towards them. We know that sometimes long hospital stays can result in debilitation, muscle loss or weakened bones; for too many seniors that means moving into a long-term care home prematurely. This program aims to allow them to continue living independently.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Strong community-based care is not only a preferred method of care for many seniors, as they can remain in their homes and out of hospitals, but it also obviously provides relief to families. It's also a much cheaper form of care than the hospital-based care that is often the alternative.

My constituents, particularly seniors, in Etobicoke Centre have also been asking me about physiotherapy. This is a service that is critical to many people in my community, and my understanding is that the government is working to improve services in a number of ways. I've heard about things such as one-on-one physiotherapy for long-term-care residents with an assessed need, enhanced access to exercise and fall prevention classes for seniors in community settings, and expanded in-home and clinic-based physiotherapy for seniors.

Services like this that are based in the community go a long way in helping families as they juggle that challenge I raised earlier of caring for aged loved ones while also raising a family. Minister, could you please tell the House more about the work that you are doing to strengthen physiotherapy access across Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member again. As part of my announcement last week, I was also able to say and announce that Ontario is expanding access to physiotherapy into primary health care settings across the province by investing more than \$4.2 million to add physiotherapy services across 25 more family health teams, nurse-practitioner-led clinics and community health centres. An estimated 71,000 people, including seniors, will now be able to access physiotherapy at the same place where they receive their primary care health services.

Improving health outcomes for seniors is also part of the government's plan to build a better Ontario through its Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care by providing patients with faster access to the right care, better home and community care, the information that they need to stay healthy and a health care system that's sustainable for generations to come. Providing seniors with more supports will allow them to live safely and independently at home and enjoy a better quality of life.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, last week you not only defended your broken social assistance computer program, you proclaimed it a success. You told the House, "At the end of the day, we have been extremely successful." Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the people waiting in line at social assistance offices and the front-line staff working overtime to clear the logjam would disagree. Minister, do you have any concern that your high-priced consultants will share your confidence about SAMS when they produce their preliminary report tomorrow?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly we have been successful in terms of the fact that we have ensured that we've processed four successful pay runs for both ODSP and OW monthly payments, payments to some 570,000 families each month. This is our priority. We have made some 2.5 million payments to our most vulnerable families in total.

Of course, I want to thank all our staff who are working so very hard on the front lines to ensure that this is happening. I know that they have had a number of frustrations, but actually, the production of these cheques has been a wonderful step forward for all those vulnerable families who rely on these payments. We have accommodated them in the way that we have, with all this hard work and the number of improvements that we have made to date on SAMS.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the minister: The fact is that this minister's testimony continues to be at critical odds with the facts. It's clear that if SAMS was working as intended, there would be no need to keep funnelling millions in to the system, nor to hire consultants to mitigate a mess so big that the government's entire IT department could not fix it.

Minister, the preliminary report is scheduled to come out tomorrow. Will you, in the spirit of government openness and transparency, make the report publicly available upon its release?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Yes, indeed, I'm looking forward to this report from our third-party technical adviser. PricewaterhouseCoopers, I understand, will be delivering this report this week. I'm looking forward to hearing those results. We will certainly be communicating the themes that we hear in that report. It is an interim report.

They have been engaging with stakeholders across the province. I attended a meeting with front-line workers and PricewaterhouseCoopers to ensure that the issues that were important to the people using the system were being fully communicated to PricewaterhouseCoopers. I look forward not only to this interim report but of course to the final report that I'm sure will have a far more fulsome response to the issues around SAMS.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. With the release of the sunshine list, Londoners were stunned to learn that the president of Western University made almost \$1 million last year—more than double his annual salary. He is the fourth-highest-paid public sector employee in the province because of a deal negotiated with Western's board of governors for twice his salary in lieu of administrative leave.

With the university cutting staff and increasing class sizes, this double payout is a slap in the face to Western students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community. Premier, will your government step in to prohibit university boards of governors from negotiating similar double payouts to university presidents?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you to the member for that question. Our government is committed in investing in our young people. That's why we have been investing heavily in our universities and colleges over the past 11 or 12 years. In the meantime, we know that Ontarians have all the right to make sure that their tax dollars are spent properly. That's why we have brought in the accountability act, which has been passed last year and received royal assent in December.

In the meantime we have frozen the executive salaries, and we expect firmly that members of the broader public sector executives follow the freeze on salaries and wages which we have introduced.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The president of Western is not the only senior university administrator among the top 10. The president and CEO of University of Toronto Asset Management Corp. is in third place at a time when the university claimed to be unable to pay teaching assistants more than poverty wages, forcing grad students and TAs to strike for fairness and recognition of their rights.

Ontario students are among the fastest-growing group of food bank users and are already paying the highest tuition in the country. They face planned, year-over-year increases in tuition to make up the chronic shortfall in post-secondary education funding.

Premier, how can your government justify hiking tuition fees and increasing reliance on contract faculty while allowing universities to negotiate these kinds of salaries to senior university administrators?

Hon. Reza Moridi: As I said earlier, we have invested heavily in our universities and colleges as well as in

our students. We have introduced a 30% discount on tuition fees for our students, which has been a great success. With regard to the specific question, the president of the University of Western Ontario opted not to take administrative leave. That's why his salary has been increased. That's our understanding.

In relation to the University of Toronto's vice-president for asset management, there was an article in his contract so that he can receive performance bonuses. So these are all the things which already existed in the contracts of those executives. But as I said earlier, we have introduced the accountability act. We are working very hard to make sure that executives in the broader public sector—that their salaries will be frozen and will be under a certain regime.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, digital technology has become a fundamental part of our daily lives. I know that even our youngest students in JK and SK use digital technology skillfully. Being able to connect with each other online has broken down borders and offered us an amazing wealth of information right at our fingertips, but it's critical that we always think about how we can leverage this technology to benefit all Ontario students and how we can improve their learning experience and make their education more flexible and affordable.

Minister, can you inform the House about our government's efforts to build a world-class post-secondary education system that is a leader in innovation and online learning?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member for that question. I am proud to say that Ontario has a strong foundation in online learning and digital learning. At the post-secondary level, we have the highest number of online learning course registrations across Canada.

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Earlier this year, our government announced an investment of \$42 million over three years to launch Ontario Online. Ontario Online is a new collaborative centre of excellence that will be available in time for the September 2015-16 school year. It will help students save money as well as time by avoiding needless duplication of courses and by helping to speed up the process for those wishing to fast-track their learning. We know that more accessible and user-friendly post-secondary education will help our young people to succeed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm glad to hear that our government is committed to driving quality and innovation in Ontario's post-secondary system.

But I know that in the past, transferring post-secondary credits from one college or university to another has been a very long and difficult process for students. Many students in my riding of Barrie want the flexibility to

easily transfer relevant credits between different colleges and universities in this province.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Can you inform the members of the House how our government is improving credit transfer opportunities for Ontario students?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, thank you to the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to giving students more flexibility and choice when it comes to post-secondary education. We are doing this by increasing credit transfer opportunities for our students and introducing new tools to help students become more mobile.

Since launching the credit transfer initiatives in 2011, our government has partnered with our colleges and universities to triple the number of transfer credits available for our students. Just recently, Colleges Ontario and the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer announced that business diploma students in Ontario colleges can simply transfer their courses from one college to another. We are also proud of supporting a website called ONTransfer.ca, which is a real-time guide for students to discover which credits they can transfer and which pathway is right for them.

Our government will continue to work with our partners in the university and college sector to make sure that our students have mobility across the province.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This weekend the Globe and Mail published a story on the ROM's crystal project. The story highlighted a problem of accountability within the Royal Ontario Museum's board of governors. The organization, which is a separate entity from the museum, functions much like a hospital foundation and is supposed to manage fundraising and donor recognition.

In this case, however, the board, members of which are appointed by your ministry, was stacked with many of those whose donations were outstanding. This led to yet another secret bailout from this government.

Minister, what will it take for you to step up and bring accountability to the public appointment process under your ministry? Will you admit that your lack of oversight has now forced yet another taxpayer bailout of a government agency?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by saying how proud I am of the work that the Royal Ontario Museum has been doing here in Ontario. They're a world-class museum, and they're recognized globally.

We have over a million people who come to Toronto each year to visit the Royal Ontario Museum. Our tourism sector here in the province of Ontario, which the Royal Ontario Museum is part of—because culture and tourism are what our museums are all about. We have contributed \$28 billion in Ontario to help build our economy, and the Royal Ontario Museum is a key part of that economy.

There is a loan that is outstanding with the Royal Ontario Museum. I'm fully convinced that the Royal Ontario Museum is on track to repay that loan, and I'll be able to give some more details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'll be looking forward to those details because we didn't get any in the first answer.

The problem with oversight is not just with the Royal Ontario Museum board of governors. Before the Christmas break, I asked about the outstanding annual reports for Ontario Place. I finally received a copy of the tabled 2011 annual report three weeks ago—four years late.

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre Corp. annual reports have been left outstanding for years at a time. Last Friday, it was revealed that four waiters are listed on the sunshine list, making over \$100,000 a year.

Do you have any idea of what's going on at these agencies? They're not watching our public dollars. When are you going to take your job seriously and provide proper oversight?

Hon. Michael Coteau: In regards to the annual reports, every single annual report from my agency has been signed by me. They're in process, and I'm quite confident they'll get to this Legislature as soon as possible.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll give you the fact that I was only halfway up, so that's good. I'll leave you alone on that one.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Michael Coteau: In regards to the \$249-million loan, which we contributed to and the federal government contributed to, 70% of that loan has been repaid by the Royal Ontario Museum—70%. They are on track to pay that loan back.

The Royal Ontario Museum is an incredible institution here in the province of Ontario and I am proud of the work that they have done and their board has done.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. This morning, Unifor released a report detailing the catastrophic impact that the possible closure of the GM plants in Oshawa would have on our economy, our community and the province as a whole. According to the report, Ontario would experience a loss of over 30,000 jobs and our GDP would decline by more than \$5 billion. In the meantime, this government continues to sit on its hands while our community lives with uncertainty and braces for impact.

Will the Premier help to put our community at ease and commit to doing everything in her power to ensure that this scenario does not become our reality?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank Jim Stanford, Jerry Dias and Unifor for their leadership in bringing forward this report. Yes, indeed we know, and they are

confirming, that Oshawa really does mean tens of thousands of jobs, billions upon billions of dollars of economic development and an impact on our GDP. That's why we're working tirelessly in partnership with Unifor.

Our number one priority right now is to ensure that the future of the GM plant in Oshawa remains bright. We have every reason to be optimistic, and Jerry Dias would and did say the exact same thing this morning. We're working in partnership to make sure we do that.

My hope, though, is that that report makes sure that the NDP recognize how important this is and, rather than equivocating when we make these important investments, stand with us when we make these important investments for a change—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: General Motors has been building cars in Oshawa for over a century, but in spite of our strong history the future remains uncertain.

Ontario was once a leader in the automotive industry, but under this government our share of production continues to decline. When the government had leverage as a shareholder, they opted not to use it. When they could have been strengthening our auto sector, they have turned their backs.

Will the government make a real commitment to the automotive industry in Ontario and implement a comprehensive automotive strategy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Unlike the NDP, we don't equivocate; we take action. This government has invested more in the auto sector than any government in any generation before us. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to make those investments, and I'll tell you why we'll make those investments: They're working.

We've seen \$4 billion of investment in Ontario's auto sector since November. That's a record amount of investment. In fact, that \$4 billion represents more than we've probably seen in many years. Things are going well in terms of our investments in the auto sector, but we're going to continue to work tirelessly to continue to land mandates. Oshawa is our number one concern, but even GM just recently invested \$560 million in Ingersoll—good news; Honda, \$857 million in Alliston; Chrysler, \$2 billion in Windsor.

We're going to keep working with the sector. We're going to keep building—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. My riding of Beaches—East York is home to numerous forward-thinking small businesses. Constituents like Cal Bruner of CaseWare, a world-leading software company, are proud of the contributions they are making to Ontario's economy and to a stronger province as a whole.

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Minister of Government and Consumer Services, your mandate is to deliver effective procurement practices that ensure the best value for the money and the guarantee of transparent and accountable investments. I personally think that many of the businesses in my riding would form productive mutually beneficial agreements with our government.

Will the minister speak to opportunities that may exist for not only large businesses but small and medium-sized businesses to engage our government?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for the question and for raising this important issue. I certainly share my colleague's confidence in Ontario businesses. Our government continues to provide them opportunities, whether it be building roads, developing software or providing maintenance equipment.

Participation in provincial procurement is open to all qualified vendors, regardless of size or location, through our Vendor of Record Program. In fact, the vast majority of businesses we deal with are small and medium-sized Ontario businesses. Our investment reflects both the quality and competitiveness of Ontario vendors. The 2013-14 stats reveal that 89% of all procurement payments were made to Ontario vendors.

It's a great program, and I'm happy to follow up in our supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister for informing us about these numerous opportunities for agreements with the Ontario government. I realize that these agreements serve multiple purposes: delivering efficient and effective services while providing excellent opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

It is equally important that taxpayers are assured that goods and services are procured through a fair, competitive and user-friendly process that benefits all Ontarians. I understand that the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has worked to simplify bidding processes for interested vendors, making sure that all postings are visible and easy to access. These types of initiatives reduce the time and effort required for vendors to bid on procurement opportunities.

Will the Minister of Government and Community Services explain to the House how simplified bidding processes work effectively with vendors?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again to the member from Beaches–East York: Thank you for the question. Streamlining the application process is very important, and we have carefully ensured that our vendor perspectives are considered in this process. After consulting extensively, we've created shorter, simpler procurement documents that are standardized with appropriate conditions and have streamlined the process.

In fact, Ontario is the first government in Canada to move to a fully electronic tendering system. While vendors used to be charged for assessing procurement opportunities, they can now download these documents free of

charge. Using electronic tendering has received positive feedback from the vendor community. Our system improves notifications; that helps reduce the number of incomplete bids and eliminates the cost of printing and shipping materials. We've added form-based evaluations that allow officials to complete more procurement in less time.

Speaker, I'm certainly pleased with the progress with respect to procurement and our Vendor of Record Program.

WORKPLACE FATALITIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: I seek unanimous consent to have a moment's silence for the two construction workers who died on the job last week in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is seeking unanimous consent to have a moment of silence in honour of the two construction workers killed in Toronto on-site. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members of the House to please rise for a moment of silence to pay our respects.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for that kind gesture.

VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I just wanted to introduce today the grandparents of the page from Cambridge, Alycia Berg: Her grandparents Donna and Howard Fammé join us this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to the Legislature Kevin Toda, who is visiting here from McGill University in Montreal. He's a political science student who has come here today to listen to question period. Welcome.

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to draw attention to the fact that today both Lisa MacLeod and Christine Elliott are celebrating their ninth anniversary of coming to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Happy anniversary.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize the local support being shown for the Almaguin Fish

Improvement Association in Parry Sound–Muskoka. The AFIA is a community stewardship program that has been involved in conserving native pickerel populations in Lake Cecebe and Ahmic Lake for over 30 years. Their hatchery is run by volunteers and does not rely on any government funding. Yet the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry contests the AFIA's actions and is again attempting to shut down the operation.

My office has received resolutions of support for the AFIA from three municipalities to date. Last week, I tabled in this House a petition containing 263 signatures, and as I speak, support continues to pour in.

These individuals and municipalities are all calling for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to take action to support the AFIA and to reinstate the community-operated hatchery. They emphasize that the biological integrity of these lakes is key to the area's economic stability, through tourism, and that their viability ought to be preserved for future generations. They also highlight the benefits of the education program run by the AFIA for local schools.

I support this local initiative, and I applaud these communities' efforts. I call on the minister and ministry to issue the required permits to allow the AFIA to continue their stocking program.

HOLY WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise as a Reverend Doctor with the United Church of Canada to wish Christians around the world and in this chamber a very holy Holy Week and, of course, to pray for those Christians who are under attack around the world, including in the Middle East, and clear up some misconceptions about what Christianity is not. It is not LGBTQ-phobic. In fact, Jesus talked about loving your neighbour, no matter who your neighbour was, and wanting for your neighbour what you want for yourself. Also, the very first Christian convert was somebody seen as sexually unclean to the powers that be of that day.

Christianity is not anti-woman. In fact, women were the last to leave the cross and the very first to proclaim the resurrection, and they even changed Jesus's mind about theology.

Christianity is also not anti-science, and it is not anti-sexuality. In fact, some of the most erotic poetry is in Song of Solomon, and God gave us the gift of reason for a reason.

To all of those around the world who are celebrating Holy Week, are going to walk with Jesus to the cross beyond and through the Resurrection, I say have a very, very blessed Easter and Good Friday and, of course, Maundy Thursday. Take care.

ENGINEERS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise to acknowledge our province's world-class engineers. Recently, I was asked by the Professional Engineers Ontario, the PEO, to take part

in their Take Your MPP to Work Day. I would like to thank Darla Campbell and Hafiz Bashir, the government liaison chairs, for putting the event together.

The good work done by our diligent engineers largely takes place behind the scenes, but one major aspect of their work—safety—affects us all every day. I commend the PEO for their leadership in developing standards that prioritize the safety of Ontarians and, furthermore, I would like to recognize them for encouraging female participation in engineering.

We still have a ways to go, but with their strong support and with three of the last five presidents being women, including Annette Bergeron, from my riding of Kingston and the Islands, the PEO has established positive, inspiring female role models for the engineers of tomorrow.

Going to the front lines is a priority for me, so I was thrilled that my visit took me to Bombardier's state-of-the-art light-rail transit design, testing and manufacturing facility. Their 450-plus highly skilled employees are building rail transit for cities around the globe, for delivery to South Africa, Brazil, Kuala Lumpur and Vancouver.

At a time when governments are focusing on environmental stewardship and fiscal responsibility, it is very exciting that rail transit optimized to these requirements is being produced right here in Ontario.

Meegwetch. Merci. Thank you.

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2015

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The two finalists for Kraft Hockeyville were announced during this past Saturday night's Hockey Night in Canada broadcast, and I'm very proud to say that my hometown of Chatham-Kent will face off against North Saanich, BC, in the final showdown for Kraft Hockeyville 2015. What an honour.

Both finalists will receive \$100,000 in arena upgrades, but the winner will host an NHL pre-season game. I can only hope it's between the Leafs and the Red Wings.

If Chatham-Kent wins, it will be a victory for the entire community, but it will mean just a little more to a special young person in the community, Chad Peterson. Chad has been an inspiration to us all. Chad has been the Chatham Maroons superfan. His love of hockey and life have inspired us all.

For months, he's been driving around Chatham-Kent in a Volkswagen Beetle with a Kraft Hockeyville logo on the side. This contest means that much to him. Why? Well, Speaker, Chad was born with a fine motor skills disability, but he has refused to give up on his dream. Recently, he was quoted in the newspaper saying, "We're going to have the best huge party at Memorial arena. Oh, yeah. We'll be live on Hockey Night in Canada—that will be totally amazing. We're going to rock Chatham-Kent."

So let's get behind Chad and the organizers who made this possible. We've come this far. Now let's bring

Hockeyville to Chatham-Kent. So go to www.KHV2015.ca to vote for Chatham-Kent today. The deadline is tonight, so vote now and vote often. If we win, I personally invite everyone to the biggest party on April 4 at Chatham Memorial Arena.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Far be it from me to interrupt a rant.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm proud to stand in this House and represent the people of Oshawa. Today, I'd like to say that General Motors has been building cars in Oshawa for over a century, but in spite of our strong history, the future remains uncertain.

This morning, Unifor released an independent study on the significance of General Motors to my community in Oshawa, and the impact the province would feel in the event of a closure. It was not a surprise to hear that the result would be devastating.

According to the report, Ontario would experience a loss of 30,000 jobs and our GDP would decline by more than \$5 billion. As the government scrambles to sell our public assets to pay for election promises, another \$1 billion would disappear from their revenue stream.

The Liberal government cannot continue to sit on its hands and wait. Ontario's automotive industry boasts state-of-the-art technology and innovation, and a skilled workforce that is rivalled by none. But it is the government's job to make sure these advantages are not overlooked. When the industry is considering where they want to build a new plant, we need to put ourselves in the best possible position to secure that investment.

In my riding, I've heard from auto workers concerned that their jobs are at risk, pensioners worried about their retirement security and small business owners afraid for the ripple effects in our local economy. I ask that the government take these concerns seriously and adopt a comprehensive automotive strategy to help put my community in Oshawa and others across Ontario at ease.

PLEIN AIR ENSEMBLE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to talk about a great event that I went to in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans last week. The event was one to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Plein Air Ensemble.

Twenty-five years ago, three artist friends, Pierrette Dulude-Bohay, Charles Spratt and Andrew Lyall, organized the first painting trip to teach students outdoor painting. Nobody would have guessed at that point that this small group would grow continuously. The group's aim is to capture the beauty of the landscape while fostering friendships among the artists.

Today, the group has about 75 members, with about 15 to 20 taking part in each trip. Most of the artists come from the Ottawa-Gatineau region. Each year, they plan a spring and a fall trip to different destinations.

During this exhibition in Orléans, 21 of the Plein Air Ensemble members showed works from different trips. The show highlighted the wonderful talent and diversity of this group of artists. I saw many fine artworks in oil, acrylic, watercolours and pastel.

I would like to recognize the event organizers, Kerstin Peters and Hélène Martin, for their outstanding work on the event and the many more to come.

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GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to report the results of my recent newsletter survey. I want to thank the hundreds of people who took the time to respond and share their concerns. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest concerns continues to be the proposal to locate a landfill on fractured bedrock near the Thames River, which would put our drinking water at risk.

One of the other major concerns is wind turbines. People are concerned about the impacts on their health and their community, and the safety at nearby airports. Ninety-three per cent of the people who responded said municipalities should have a say in where wind turbines are located.

When I read the responses, I'm always struck by the impact of this government's policies, and how difficult they are making it for people to make ends meet. Forty-nine per cent of the respondents said that their hydro bills had increased by 20% to 50% over the last 10 years, and 30% said their hydro bills had increased by more than 50%. People are doing everything they can to keep costs down, but the increases are staggering.

This government is now proposing to charge them for a pension plan. It's not that they don't want more retirement income; it's that they can't afford this government's proposal. Seventy-eight per cent of residents said they can't afford to pay 1.9% of their income into the proposed pension program. These are the numbers that government needs to consider before they push ahead.

Again, I want to thank everyone who took the time to respond so I can continue to raise their concerns here in the Legislature.

WATERLOO REGION COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES

Ms. Daïene Vernile: Recently, I had the opportunity to drop in on Waterloo Region Community Legal Services. This is a non-profit agency under Legal Aid Ontario. Executive director Shannon Down told me that her mandate is to provide access to legal services for people and groups facing financial barriers when trying to seek legal counsel.

In my riding of Kitchener Centre, I often meet with constituents who have benefited from the legal clinic with issues such as social assistance and disability appeals, Landlord and Tenant Board cases, and workplace safety and insurance claims.

The clinic is especially important to new Canadians, who may not have a full grasp of our official languages. They're often vulnerable and lacking in understanding of our legal system. They don't always know their rights.

As part of our government's commitment to promoting fairness and accessibility in the justice system, regardless of income, we dedicated an additional \$30 million to Legal Aid Ontario in our 2014 budget. The result of this investment has meant greater capacity for the clinic to meet the demand they face.

After more than 25 years, our community legal clinic continues to provide vital access to the legal process for those who might otherwise be underserved or excluded.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated service providers of legal clinics across Ontario who fulfill this very important mission every day.

HOLI GALA FUNDRAISER

Ms. Harinder Malhi: On Friday, I had the pleasure of attending the William Osler Health System Foundation's second annual Holi Gala fundraiser. This spectacular community event took place to celebrate Holi, which is traditionally celebrated by members of the Hindu faith. The festival is known as the festival of colours and the festival of love. As such, the festival has grown to become popular among Indians and Canadians of all faiths and backgrounds.

On this evening, the Grand Empire convention centre was alight with colours, as over 700 guests, including members of all three levels of government, were in attendance to partake in an evening full of fun, food and dance. There were performances by magicians, dance teams and world-renowned singers Nindy Kaur and Manj Musik, as well as acting sensation Vinay Virmani.

Through sponsorships, donations, auctions and raffles, the organizers were able to raise a remarkable \$150,000 for redevelopment initiatives at all three Osler locations, as well as equipment needs at the Brampton Civic Hospital, which is in my riding.

As a direct result of the proceeds from this event, members of our community will have greater access to the services they require in their hospitals and health care facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organizers, volunteers, board members, doctors, nurses and all the staff, as well as William Osler's president and CEO, Matt Anderson, for all the work they continue to do for our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

It is now time for introduction of bills. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today is the second anniversary of the passing of MPP Peter Kormos. I thought, to think of Mr. Kormos a little bit, I would introduce a bill that he would introduce every time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (STRIKE AND LOCK-OUT INFORMATION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES GRÈVES ET LES LOCKOUTS)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to information relating to strikes and lock-outs / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne les renseignements sur les grèves et les lockouts.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement, which is where she should have done her preamble.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry. I messed up a bit there. I'll try to make amends.

Peter Kormos passed two years ago. The anti-scab legislation is something that he would bring on the docket at every Parliament, so I thought I would continue with the bill to amend the Labour Relations Act to require employers to provide information regarding the use of replacement workers—or scabs, as Peter would call them—in the event of strikes or lockouts, to the minister. The minister is required to publish this information that he receives.

For the USW members on strike at Crown for the last 19 months, this is for you.

TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE RÉSEAU TRILLIUM POUR LE DON DE VIE

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act / *Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today being the second anniversary of Peter Kormos's death, I thought I would introduce two bills that were dear to him. This one has to do with assumed consent. There wasn't a bigger cham-

pion in Ontario of organ donation than Peter Kormos. He tried for a long time to get this bill to go through. He would joke that he had tattooed on his stomach, and threatened to show me, which I didn't want to see, "Take these organs if need be."

Basically, what the bill does is, it brings assumed consent so that everybody would be assumed to be willing organ donors unless they made it clear that they are not.

This is something that I fully support, and this is something that Peter pushed for a long time.

PETITIONS

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

"Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I fully support it and sign my name and send it with page lan.

1320

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal

dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Max.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions that support improved winter road maintenance with another 250 signatures. I note that one is Tony Clement, the federal member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, who signed this as well. It reads:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

I support this petition and will give it to Jade.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

"Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

"(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;
 "(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

"(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to Japneet to take to the table.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition entitled "Population-Based Legal Services Funding."

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I agree with the petition, sign my name and leave it with page Ranen.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

All of these petitions were collected this weekend at the home show. I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Cameron to take to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have this petition named "Ontario Is Not for Sale."

"Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

"Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

"Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hard-working Ontarians who are building this province; and

"Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Stop the selling off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to put my name on it and give it to page Emma to bring to the Clerk.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to read this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

I could not agree any more with this petition. I'm going to sign it and give it to page Alycia to bring to the table.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan to introduce a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme increases the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;"

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support. I'll send it to the table with page Kari.

1330

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I wholeheartedly support this petition, will sign my name to it and give it page Cynthia.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me pleasure to rise here once again this afternoon and read this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to affix my name and send it to the table with page Luc.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it with page Max.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Madame Diane Huard from Val Caron, in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Marin to bring it to the Clerk.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Harinder Malhi: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I’ll sign this petition and give it to page Caleb.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That completes our time for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la

santé publique par l’édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 45 at second reading, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry had the floor. I recognize the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. My last discussion was talking about, of course, the healthy foods part of it and the need for calorie numbering, which I agree with. I had some discussion, really, about a failed policy with this government: how we’re not seeing the results we’re hoping for. I’ve been talking with a number of teachers—I’ve got three in my own family, and certainly with a number of neighbours and friends. Really, it has to be more of a package. If we’re really going to have an impact—and again, I urge the government to go back to the science—we need the addition of exercise to be part of this whole program. I hear many times about the need for exercise—so many minutes a day—but so far, I believe it’s only a required one course in a four-year program in high school now for physical education, and that includes health. So I think instead of concentrating on some of the glamorous titles and issues, it really gets back to basics. Part of it is how to eat, but the other part is how to really blend your diet with your exercise. I hope this government will look at that, and maybe we can make some changes.

Next up—while we’re talking on failed policies—is the cigarette policy. We aren’t seeing appreciable improvements with our smoking rates when it comes to our children. Of course, there couldn’t be any more information available as to the negative aspects of smoking. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, we’re probably the hardest hit in this province when it comes to contraband cigarettes. A study done at a couple of local high schools showed that up to 90% of the cigarette butts—they pick up the butts and they review just where they’re from—are contraband. So I see that part of the practice is to go out and beat up our local grocery stores and convenience stores. Really, they’re beating up the wrong people. They should be going around beating up the criminals who are out there who are selling—this is important tax revenue that the government is missing. Instead of talking about a new carbon tax, we could look at trying to recoup some of the taxes we’re losing.

There are a couple of things that could certainly help, and one is—in my riding, I think most people think it’s illegal to smoke if you’re under 19, but of course, it’s not. I’m not sure why you would make it illegal to sell to minors but you wouldn’t make it illegal to smoke, as we do with alcohol. If you really want to have an impact, I think that would be a big part of it, instead of the current practice of sending our tobacco police out and seeing if they happen to step off the sidewalk in their approved smoking areas.

There was a case at one of the local high schools where they had a glass front. The smoking officer used to

sit inside the staff room, and if they noticed somebody step off the sidewalk—and you can imagine 20 students in an area on a four-foot sidewalk, and the fooling around that goes on—they ran out and they charged them with an offence: for smoking on school property. The whole idea that if it's bad for you—I think the public expects that it is illegal at that age. Really, if you're going to have some impact, I think that's the other part of it.

I just want to recount a conversation I had with one of the local high school principals. He was talking about when they used to allow them to smoke on school property. He said, "I used to be able to go out and monitor who was actually there in the group." Now he says, "They're out on private property. I see people out there buying illegal cigarettes. I see them buying drugs. I go out there and I try to use my influence to shoo the bad guys off. But they can just say, 'No, it's private property. Buzz off.'"

That's what we're seeing. We're giving this illegal drug trade, the illegal contraband trade, a place to actually go, and they know they're going to have a market of 10 or 15 kids any time of the day.

1340

I can go by one of the schools out in the country—back on Highway 43, we have a couple of them. The nearest village is five miles away, and yet there are 20 people out on the roadway smoking—access to anybody who wants to stop. That whole philosophy of gathering a group together—it becomes a cool place to be.

We're seeing the results: It's just not working. It's interesting when you talk about the contraband. Some studies show it's up between 15% and 30%, and it could get worse.

Here's a letter that was sent to me. It says:

"Dear members of provincial Parliament,

"As part of my pre-budget presentation to the finance committee last week, I presented some new public opinion data (commissioned by the Ontario Convenience Stores Association) on illegal tobacco, including data on the proposed ban on flavoured tobacco products which includes a menthol tobacco ban.

"The survey provides substantial evidence that a flavoured tobacco ban and/or tax increase would drive tobacco users to illegal tobacco sources. Our retailers are concerned that the cost of the flavour ban legislation will be greater than the benefits of this policy...."

"We are also supporting a tougher stance on youth tobacco consumption—one that is supported by a majority of Ontarians. Our retailers feel it is important to share this data with you so that, as decision-makers, you have all of the necessary information in evaluating the potential consequences of this bill.

"Here's what a survey of 1,500 Ontarians (including 1,000 tobacco users) had to say ...

"Two thirds of respondents felt that contraband tobacco was either a major or minor problem.

"But, a large proportion of tobacco users still admit to purchasing untaxed tobacco products illegally: one

quarter of tobacco users admit to purchasing" contraband cigarettes, "and 69% would consider doing so.

"Banning a product, such as menthol, will not decrease its attractiveness: 43% of tobacco users said they would find the banned product somewhere else.

"Seventy per cent of tobacco users said they would consider buying untaxed tobacco if there were another tax increase on legal tobacco products.

"A plurality of Ontarians (including non-smokers) believe that raising taxes on tobacco products will increase the use of contraband tobacco....

"Most Ontarians (89%) mistakenly think that it is illegal for minors to purchase tobacco in Ontario. While it is illegal for a retailer to sell to a minor, it is not illegal for the minor to purchase it."

I think that's a problem. We look at minors coming into stores and providing false IDs, and there's no issue around that, but they march all over the private store owners.

Another study we have: "Study Shows One in Four Minors Leave LCBO Stores with Booze; One in Five from the Beer Store; Convenience Stores Best at Testing for Age.

"May 30, 2011—Toronto—An independent study of LCBO, the Beer Store and convenience stores has shown that the LCBO fares poorly when it comes to checking minors for age. The study, conducted by independent research firm Statopex Field Marketing on behalf of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, used two groups of secret shoppers, minors aged 15-18 and young adults aged 19-24, to randomly test retailers on how well they check for age....

"When tested with underage secret shoppers (age 15-18), convenience stores scored the highest with an 87.3% pass rate, the Beer Store next with 80.7% and LCBO last with 74.6%—meaning one in four minors successfully purchased age-restricted products from LCBO, and one in five from the Beer Store—compared to one in eight for convenience stores.

"Testing with young adult secret shoppers near the age of majority (age 19-24) revealed that convenience stores once again scored highest with a 73.3% pass rate ... and the LCBO once again came in last with 40.5%."

That's some of the science they're using to try to ban this, but they're going after the little guy. They're not going after the government-sponsored stores, where the failure rate is drastically higher—and again, I guess I would support this.

I had a daughter who worked in one of these convenience stores. Of course, she had a little bit of a different slant on it. She wouldn't sell cigarettes to her friends, even when she knew they were 19, because she didn't like them smoking. So they would come in and they were of age, but they would have to go elsewhere.

But she used to talk about some of the shoppers who would come in and catch some of the—you know, generally, these are students; it's likely their first job, some of them, 15 or 16 years old. There's a car parked illegally outside with somebody in the car sending somebody in in

a big panic and putting pressure on people to sell, or coming in with IDs that are doctored up so you really have to look at them carefully. Of course, they swoop in and charge them.

I was on the local health board, and of course I used to get these complaints. They used to bring them up, and I'd be assured that, of course, they have people who look like they're 15 or who look like they are younger doing these test shoppings. It was interesting. One of the members on the health board was a former principal. He talked to me and he agreed that bylaw enforcement is not a pretty thing. But he said, "I take a little offence when you say that somebody's looking 15." And he said to a friend of his on the board, "Robbie, you know the person they're talking about. Would you have dreamt that she was under 25? To say that she looked like she was 15 is a stretch."

Those are the types of tricks we're doing, but we're not going into our own government stores that are scoring much worse. These people are really trying to do a good job, but the whole system is flawed. If you really want to have an impact, I think you have to start looking at making it illegal for minors to smoke and taking away their ability—you know, the get-out-of-jail-free zone where they can go off school property. You're just enticing them to a safe place, and of course, you're giving the people that are breaking the law a chance to go to them.

The other issue is on the menthol cigarettes. I think up to almost 50% of the population smokes menthol cigarettes. I don't smoke, and I've never smoked, but certainly a lot of my family did smoke, and a lot of them have stopped. I think now, to go back and take those off the market—I mean, if it was easy to stop, people would stop. I've got letters here talking about that. Of course, as we mentioned before, it only means more people are going to buy illegal cigarettes. It's not a proven way of trying to stop these people from smoking. I think that going the route they are won't have the results. It might be commendable to try these things, but if we know beforehand they aren't going to work, maybe there's a better way.

It's the same with electronic cigarettes. I've got letters here from people. I've got one that's addressed to Premier Wynne and Associate Minister of Health Damerla:

"My name is"—I won't say it. "I am an ex-smoker and you've lost my vote. Twenty-one years ago I quit ... cold turkey. I was so miserable for three months my wife refused to quit ... and she held true to her word until about two years ago. She made the decision to try once again to quit smoking as we were walking through a mall in Ottawa and passed a vendor selling electronic cigarettes. She made a comment of how this might work for her so I bought her the first starter kit. I would love to say she quit instantly, however this is not the case. She bounced back and forth between the cigarettes and her e-cig for the first year" or so. "Six months ago she had weaned herself down from a pack a day" to one or two

cigarettes a day. "Now she does not smoke at all. She is breathing better, she has more energy, and is generally happier all round that she kicked her 20-plus-year pack-a-day habit. And Bill 45 will treat this product as a real cigarette?"

I know I just have a few seconds, but it talks about how they agree you shouldn't be selling it to minors, but it's a great tool, probably the best tool and maybe the only tool for most people to actually quit smoking. They caution the government on making them as illegal as a cigarette. They are vapour only. They don't have smoke. I certainly encourage the government to rethink that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting listening to the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I will start by congratulating his daughter who put her job on the line to protect the health of her friends by refusing to sell them cigarettes when they came to her store. It takes quite a bit of courage to do this, I can imagine—she was a young person herself—if her friends were in that bracket and she actually understood that if she kept young people from picking up smoking, then there was a good chance they wouldn't become smokers and they wouldn't have the outcomes that one out of two smokers face, which is that tobacco, used as directed, kills one out of two users. So congratulations to your daughter.

1350

The same thing on his explanation of the bylaw enforcement by the health units: No, those are not glorifying jobs by any stretch of the imagination, but once we have regulation in place, it has to be enforced. Otherwise, it's all for none. I know that 99% of convenience store owners and people who are allowed to sell tobacco do respect the bylaw, but in part, because we're all human beings, knowing that there is somebody who is going to come and check up on you and knowing that the penalties are severe if you get caught helps to make sure that we continue to have 99% of the tobacco sellers respecting the bylaws.

Lastly, again, it takes a lot of bravery to stand in this House and say that he will support that not only minors be forbidden from purchasing tobacco, but also possessing and consuming it. I know that other provinces do this; we don't in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry for getting his thoughts on the record today with regard to Bill 45.

When it comes to Bill 45, I like to take direction on public health matters from my MOH in the riding of Peterborough, Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, MOH for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit. I meet with her on a very frequent basis. Recently, she brought to me a delegation of high school students from both the public high school system and the Catholic high school system in Peterborough. They certainly impressed upon me, working with the public health unit, that Bill 45 needs to

be passed as we bring in other legislative measures to remove the scourge of smoking and the use of tobacco products in the province of Ontario.

I can't comment on other communities across Ontario, but I can comment on LCBO employees and members of the United Food and Commercial Workers who work at the Beer Store in my riding of Peterborough. It is my experience—and I've chatted with these two employee groups on numerous occasions—how vigilant they are in asking people for identification and making sure that underaged individuals do not buy alcohol beverage products, particularly in my community of Peterborough. These professional employees, whether it's the LCBO or the Beer Store, know that the problem of drinking and driving and, in fact, diseases that are related to the excessive use of alcohol are a pressing public health concern, so I just want to recognize their very good efforts.

When it comes to labelling, labelling is very important. From a broader perspective, last Friday, I had the opportunity to attend the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards. The message there is that everybody is looking at labels for healthy food in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm just going to start by offering a belated happy birthday greeting to my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Jimmy celebrated a birthday during March break. Of course, we weren't here, so just in case that got missed, I'd like to do that on behalf of our caucus.

He's a great guy. He comes to work every day on behalf of the constituents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry with a practical thought process. He does a great job of holding the government to account. He brings lots of ideas that can improve their legislation, and there was no change today with this piece of legislation.

What he talked about today was failed policy—he has three teachers in his family—particularly with regard to physical activity in high schools; it should be mandatory. It doesn't have to be a sport, necessarily, but something to keep people active and fit, because a good, healthy diet and exercise are the best ways to ensure that people have good health and stay out of our hospitals.

He raised a really good point—again, a failed policy—with regard to where they're going with smoking. Like him, I've never smoked. The difference with me is my two brothers, Norm and Gord, are quite a bit older than me. When I was five years old, they forced me to have a cigarette, then they forced me to have a pipe and then they forced me to have a cigar, and it was not good. The colour of these chairs might give you an idea of what happened. I'm not necessarily promoting it for everyone else out there, but I'll tell you, it worked like a charm for me. I've never smoked a day since and never will.

He raised a really valuable point in regard to—we make it illegal for people to not have cigarettes, but we don't for youth. So they can't have them, but they can consume them, and they can actually probably sell them if they so choose. I think there's a real opportunity, if we really want to get to the heart of this, to do it.

We also need to be addressing the contraband. He talked about menthol cigarettes as well as e-cigarettes. The people that can't get them through the legal way don't necessarily stop smoking if we ban them; they just go to the illegal—which, again, we're losing out on tax revenue. More importantly, that health is still declining, and we're promoting more and more that bad habit of smoking.

We've also been approached by people about smoking cessation. Sometimes these products help people to actually stop smoking. I had one of my vendors in my riding on the weekend approach me on this. We need to look at and make sure we do balanced legislation to serve all of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm absolutely privileged, of course, to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Hamilton Mountain—their thoughts on what they feel that G45 will bring to their lives.

I had my time to speak on this bill, and for quite a bit of my time I talked about healthy food and making sure that people of all incomes have the ability to eat healthy vegetables, and what that would do. If they had a better income, possibly—people on OW or ODSP and their low income, and how they're struggling to get those healthy benefits. That's where I spent a lot of my time debating on this bill.

I just want to mention the member from Nickel Belt and how she has brought forward at least 11 private members' bills that have fed G45, and the work that she has put into it for years. I'm thankful that the Liberals are finally starting to listen to the great ideas that she has consistently brought forward on menu labelling and on stricter tobacco control. She wrote to the Premier in August 2014, talking about e-cigarettes and making sure that we had some kind of control, because we still know that, although they're doing a great job helping people quit cigarettes, it's also giving other people the opportunity to think, "It's not a cigarette but I can vapour and I do these kinds of things." Yet, we still don't know the true health effects and what that will bring in the future.

I'm thankful that we're going to see some of this. I wish—as said by the member from Nickel Belt when she did her presentation on this—that there would have been some sodium labelling and other aspects that could have been brought forward. Hopefully, through amendments, we'll be able to make those changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments.

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the speakers from Parkdale–High Park, the Minister of Agriculture, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and Hamilton Mountain.

I kind of chuckle when I hear the member from Parkdale–High Park talk about my daughter, because I will say—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Nickel Belt.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm sorry; Nickel Belt, yes—because she'd be a challenge for the store owners at MacDonald's Grocers, but I think they appreciated her, and I don't think she told them that much. But she used to come in just furious about some of the tricks she had seen pulled.

I go to one of the other villages where a person had been charged with cigarettes, and it's tough. I can see that the children are trying to get in, and they have them sign papers, but you're talking about people that are nervous. You have professional shoppers come in—that's habit—and you make them do things they wouldn't normally do. They have to put up a sign saying, "We sold contraband cigarettes illegally to a minor."

Anyway, with the new regulations, he had to do a lot of renovations at the store. While he was doing that, he took the sign off the wall, while they were replacing the counters and cupboards and made them so they were not visible. Tobacco cigarettes came in, gave him another fine and extended his ban on selling for another three months.

I'm thinking: Why are you doing this? Your own government stores have a much worse record—and nothing for them. Small businesses are having a hard time making a go—taxes, hydro rates—and this is how we treat them.

More or less, back to the bill here. I appreciate the comments from the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound about working in exercise. Really, when they are children, we have to get the message across. It's a story and it's a package. Part of that is exercise and eating properly. One without the other is not going to do it.

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Again, I really believe that if we're going to get serious about the cigarettes, we have to start making it illegal and really giving our police the tools to do something, like we do with alcohol. I think we've solved that problem somewhat, and it would certainly give them more tools.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Perth-Wellington on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would just like to acknowledge some people who are in the House today—they are the grandparents of Alycia Berg: Howard and Donna Famme, who are sitting in this gallery. I believe the Bergs are sitting in that gallery over there. Welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Welcome, indeed, to the Legislature.

Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's an honour for me to rise in the House today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to join the debate on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

I want to say at the outset, as my colleagues have been very clear about, that New Democrats will be supporting this bill. We will be supporting it because we have been

calling on the government for years to take action on the exact same health promotion issues that are addressed in Bill 45. We have been pushing the government to ensure that Ontarians have information about the calories they are consuming when they buy their meals in restaurants, and we have been pushing the government to protect the health of young people by introducing new measures to discourage smoking.

My colleague the member for Nickel Belt and health critic for the Ontario NDP caucus has been leading this fight since she was first elected to this Legislature back in 2007. She has introduced at least 11 private member's bills on calorie menu labelling and stricter tobacco control measures, and she was one of the first to raise red flags about the lack of regulation of e-cigarettes.

I want to acknowledge her leadership and her persistence, because the member for Nickel Belt did not give up. Despite prorogation and two elections, and despite the Liberal government's unwillingness to take action, the member for Nickel Belt kept reintroducing her legislation until the government finally agreed to address the issues that are before us today in Bill 45. I'm proud of the work she has done and proud to be her colleague. It is thanks to her dedication that MPPs are debating this important legislation today.

Bill 45 includes three schedules: The first schedule deals with calorie counts on menus, the second schedule deals with flavoured tobacco products and the third schedule deals with e-cigarettes, also known as vaporizers.

Schedule 1 requires owners and operators of food-service establishments with 20 or more locations in Ontario to display the number of calories in each food or drink item offered for sale. By requiring calorie labelling on the menus of chain restaurants, Bill 45 will help families make more informed decisions about their food choices. It is good public policy and a natural extension of the requirements that have been in place over the last decade for nutritional information to be included on prepackaged food.

Ontarians use that nutritional information to make healthy choices when they are buying food at the grocery store. There's evidence to show that once that information became available, consumers used their purchasing power to force brand names to change their recipes, and food processing companies used the information to promote their products; for example, to advertise their products as reduced fat or low sodium.

As people's lives have gotten busier over the past decade, we are seeing more and more people eating in restaurants. On average, Canadians prepare and eat at home only two out of every three meals. With Bill 45, nutritional information is moving from the back of a package box to the front of a restaurant menu. Certainly, some restaurants have already taken steps to make calorie counts available to their customers, but it's usually on the back of a placemat, on a company website or in a brochure that's buried behind the counter.

The difference is that Bill 45 would make the information available at the point of sale. Customers wouldn't

have to ask for it or have staff search for it. It would be available on the menu display board when a customer goes into a fast-food restaurant, and it would be available at all restaurants across the province with more than 20 locations. Point-of-sale menu labelling will help people make more informed choices about their food items, and it makes a difference in the choices that people make.

The Ontario Medical Association has found that children eat almost twice as many calories when they eat at a restaurant compared to eating at home, and we know that there is much greater risk of being overweight as adults when children are overweight in their youth.

We've also heard about the significant health costs associated with being overweight. The financial cost to Ontario's health care system is about \$1.6 billion annually in direct costs, with another \$2.9 billion in indirect costs. While Bill 45 will not, in and of itself, reverse the statistics on youth obesity, it is an important step in the right direction.

Frankly, it's too bad that it is such a small step. Bill 45 will only require calories to be posted. It will not provide anywhere near the kind of information that consumers can get from a package in a grocery store. It will not require restaurants to post the sodium content of their menu items, as was required by the private member's bill brought forward by the member for Nickel Belt. It will not require foodservice premises to list the recommended daily caloric intake for children, youth and adults, as was recommended by Ontario's Healthy Kids Panel in the Healthy Kids Strategy.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit from my community sent a letter to the Premier earlier this month urging that Bill 45 be amended to include clear, prominent labelling of both calories and sodium content on menus. Their letter cites a study conducted in 2013 that showed alarmingly high sodium content in Canadian restaurant foods. Children's fast-food items contained an average of 790 milligrams of sodium per serving, which is two thirds of the recommended intake for children. Children's side dishes contained an additional 375 milligrams of sodium.

The health unit points out that while calorie counts are essential to address obesity prevention, information about sodium content is also needed to achieve broader public health goals.

We know that Canadians want more information about the food they consume. Just over a year ago, Environics reported that 92% of Canadian adults agreed that it's important to know the nutritional breakdown of the foods they eat. Nine out of 10 Canadians felt that they would be missing pertinent information if they only got calorie counts. In addition to calories, they wanted to know the total amounts of fat, sodium, trans fats and sugars.

Another study, by a researcher at the University of Waterloo, showed that publishing this information and making consumers aware of calorie and sodium counts can trigger concrete changes in behaviour. It can switch people's decisions about what they're going to eat. Certainly I know that when I check the nutritional

information on the items I purchase at the grocery store, I will put something back on the shelf if I find that it's too high in sodium. So the lack of sodium content information in this bill is a real concern to New Democrats and a real concern to public health experts across this province.

The second schedule of Bill 45 amends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products. It also allows cabinet the authority to exempt certain flavoured tobacco products from the new ban. Our understanding from the government is that the exemption will apply to menthol-flavoured tobacco products for a period of two years, after which the sale of these products will also be prohibited.

This schedule of the bill doubles the maximum fines for individuals and corporations for many contraventions of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, making these penalties the highest in Canada, and also authorizes inspectors to seize tobacco products that are prohibited from sale.

One thing that is not in this schedule of the bill is the date that the legislation will come into force. The schedule currently says only that it will take effect on a day to be named by proclamation. So it's hard to know, from the current wording of the legislation, exactly when flavoured tobacco products, and menthol products in particular, will be banned.

New Democrats have major questions and concerns about this schedule of the bill, which we hope will be addressed when the bill goes to committee. First, we do not understand the rationale for exempting menthol-flavoured tobacco products from the ban for a period of two years. During her speech on Bill 45, my colleague the member for Nickel Belt shared her experience with her private member's bill to ban cigarillos. Her legislation passed, which, as we know, is rare for private members' bills and demonstrates all-party recognition of the importance of this issue. However, the bill became obsolete before it could be enacted because the tobacco companies figured out a way to reinvent their product so that it would not be subject to the ban.

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By giving tobacco companies two years' notice before the phase-out of menthol products, what we are doing is giving them two years to find other means of getting their products into the hands of young people. The government is caving to the pressure of the tobacco companies and providing them with a window that they can use to find loopholes and come up with new menthol products that will entice young people to start smoking.

From the tobacco industry's perspective, the earlier you can hook a young person on smoking, the longer you'll have a customer and the more money you'll make; that is, until the smoker dies from cancer or other smoking-related diseases. Selling flavoured tobacco—tobacco that is packaged to look like candy, that comes in cherry, grape and all kinds of tempting flavours—has been a very effective marketing strategy for the tobacco industry to gain new customers among youth.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, fully half of Canadian youth who reported smoking used flavoured

tobacco products. In Ontario, that represents more than 57,000 youth. Make no mistake about it: Menthol tobacco has also been a key part of the tobacco industry's marketing strategy. In fact, it is the most popular flavour of flavoured tobacco. More than 19,000 Ontario youth, or one in four of the youth who are smokers, say that they are smoking menthol cigarettes. Even more troubling from a public health perspective is the fact that high school students who smoke menthol smoke substantially more cigarettes per week and are three times more likely to intend to keep smoking.

Tobacco use continues to be the leading preventable cause of death and disease in our province. It is responsible for 30% of all cancer deaths and 85% of lung cancer cases. In Ontario, there are 13,000 deaths each year from tobacco use.

Stopping youth from smoking before they start is incredibly important, because the vast majority of smokers start before the age of 18. Removing tobacco products that target youth can have a huge impact on smoking and cancer rates in this province. A government that is serious about reducing the unacceptable toll of illness and death from tobacco use must do everything possible to prevent tobacco companies from seducing our young people.

I want to share with members of this House a statement I received from a high school student in London name Jack Zhan, who is the co-chair of YouthCan, a London youth group that meets monthly to plan activities involving cancer prevention, advocacy and fundraising in schools and the community. YouthCan's slogan is, "You are never too young to make a difference in the fight against cancer." YouthCan has organized many different events in London to reach out to people in our community and last year collected 1,376 signatures in support of Bill 45.

Jack wrote to me and said: "As a teenager, I truly believe Bill 45 is a crucial bill to be passed. For several months, our YouthCan team, with the Canadian Cancer Society, have been going around London collecting signatures with the goal to ban the use of flavoured tobacco in Ontario. Flavoured tobacco is a sneaky and deceptive tactic used by the tobacco industry to attract youth into smoking in order to replace the dying smokers. If this bill passes, the future would look a lot brighter for us youth today. End the flavour by passing Bill 45!"

The third schedule of the bill enacts the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014, to regulate the sale, display, promotion and use of e-cigarettes in Ontario, which are also known as vaporizers. This schedule of the act also bans the sale or supply of electronic cigarettes and any components to anyone under age 19. In addition, this schedule of the bill bans the sale of prescribed flavoured e-cigarettes. This means that flavoured e-cigarettes will still be available for sale until they are specifically prescribed as banned.

New Democrats believe that regulations to restrict the sale and use of e-cigarettes to persons over age 19 make good sense. I know that we have all received emails from

people with conflicting information about e-cigarettes, but we believe that the government needs to act on the basis of the precautionary principle; that is, until there is a solid body of evidence concerning the health impacts of e-cigarettes, we need to take precautions and treat e-cigarettes just as we treat conventional cigarettes.

Aside from the health impacts of e-cigarettes, we support regulating these products because we want to ensure that smoking is not normalized again. We do not want young people to vape and then perhaps pick up smoking, too. We do not want to undo the work that has taken decades to achieve to denormalize smoking by allowing e-cigarettes.

In closing, I want to reiterate the support of the NDP caucus for this bill. However, it is important to keep in mind that the bill does not do everything the Liberals say it does. The Liberals claim that menthol tobacco products will be banned, but as I have pointed out, the bill says nothing about menthol specifically. The bill also allows the government to exempt certain flavoured tobacco products from the ban. We have been told by the Liberals that this means that menthol tobacco products will be exempted for a period of two years.

Speaker, New Democrats support Bill 45; there is no question about it. But we would like to see it go much further. We would like to see an explicit ban on menthol tobacco products. We would like to see sodium labelling on restaurant menus, as well as recommended caloric intakes.

New Democrats will work to make Bill 45 stronger by proposing amendments in committee. We will continue to work with public health professionals and advocates to ensure that health promotion efforts remain at the forefront of the political agenda.

When we look at issues around sodium labelling, for example, we know that nine out of 10 people in Ontario consume too much sodium, which compromises their health. Overconsumption of sodium is associated with all kinds of complications, such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, osteoporosis, stomach cancer—the list goes on. We have an opportunity in Bill 45 to address some of these issues and provide Ontarians with clear information about the sodium content of the items they are purchasing in restaurants. New Democrats believe that this is an important health promotion responsibility, and we would like to see the legislation amended to include sodium content.

It has taken the Liberals a long time to finally do the right thing for the health of families and kids. The Liberals could have passed a bill requiring menu labelling six years ago. They could have supported the private member's legislation that was originally brought forward by my colleague the MPP for Nickel Belt. They could have supported her other private member's bill to ban flavoured tobacco products, which she introduced in the last Parliament.

Clearly, governments should be doing all they can to prevent young people from starting to smoke and to encourage people to quit. Banning all flavours of tobacco products in all types of products is critical to this effort.

In closing, I urge the support of MPPs across this Legislature for Bill 45. It's an important and much-needed step to a healthy Ontario. It is widely supported by people in my community of London West and, I know, by people in ridings across this province.

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I look forward to seeing its passage through this Legislature and its comprehensive review in committee so that improvements can be made, so that the health of Ontarians can be taken into account and a much stronger bill comes back to this Legislature for third reading and is enacted in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you to the member for London West for her remarks and for her expression of support for the legislation moving forward. It sounds like it's a caucus-level support, which is great.

I think it's very clear, based on this legislation, that the Minister of Health and our government are very much committed to pledging to reduce tobacco use prevalence to make it the lowest in the country. There has obviously been significant progress made, and that's why our government is moving forward with this legislation and the regulations that go along with it that will very much strengthen our ability to reduce youth exposure in particular.

It's important to state, and I think the member referenced it, that this is not simply a reintroduction of our previous legislation. This act has been amended to include new initiatives to help accomplish our government's goals and it does look to, of course, ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthol, regardless of the timing. Everybody, I think, very much acknowledges now, even from a medical point of view, that flavoured tobacco products have tended to very much prove to be a gateway to tobacco use and addiction for young people.

It's kind of remarkable when one looks at the statistics, actually, that one in four high school students who report smoking have apparently smoked menthol cigarettes in the past 30 days. There are all kinds of other statistics that make that case as well.

The long and the short of it is that the proposed legislation very much strengthens our Smoke-Free Ontario Act by increasing penalties for selling tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada, and strengthening enforcement to test for tobacco use in indoor public places. We would look forward to seeing strong support of this legislation by all parties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It gives me pleasure to rise and speak to the remarks from the member from London West. I look around the chamber and I think we're all supporting this bill. But I look at the pages that we have here, and I hope they're listening to what's going on in the House today, because very often pages will be probably bored to tears as to what we're talking about and maybe not understand some of the things we're talking about. But this is a good piece of legislation that certainly

they can take back, when they get back to school, and perhaps talk to their schoolmates about.

If we get the younger folks to buy into legislation like this, it certainly helps legislators' jobs in making sure that this is—that the message gets out, I guess is what I'm trying to say. So I would hope that the pages are listening to this debate rather intently and can take something out of it back to their home ridings and their home schools.

I think something that hasn't been brought up in the Legislature about this bill—I've certainly seen it on television and I've seen it in movies. Years ago, for the most part, they stopped actors from using cigarettes when they were in the movies. It used to be quite prevalent, a long time ago. You see it happening more these days in television programs and movies: They're getting back to using cigarettes in the movies. I wonder if that's something that we can look at in the future. Whether it should have been part of this bill—maybe it could have been. But I think that's something that we have to be aware of, that if you watch a lot of TV programs, they are using tobacco.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a real pleasure to listen to my colleague from London West basically make a very good analysis of the bill that we have in front of us. She went through the three pieces of the bill, showing that we do give our support to all three. But we think that within the aim and the goal of the bill, there are opportunities to make little changes that will have a huge impact.

On the first part of the bill that has to do with calorie labelling, certainly we agree with calorie labelling to the big chains. They already have that information on the backs of their little trays or on the poster on the way to the bathroom or in a brochure that nobody seems to be able to find. Now we will have it right there on the menu board, telling you the number of calories.

What an opportunity wasted to not add sodium. A bill is not an incremental process. You either get it done or it doesn't get done for many, many years. I would say that it will be a decade before we look at this again. Let's get this right. We are going to mandate them to change their menu boards. If they're going to be changing their menu boards, it's a good time to put a check for high sodium.

When it comes to banning flavoured tobacco, something I've been working on for a long time, we know they target kids; there's no doubt about it. I used to buy a lot of those products when we were getting ready to introduce the bills. Nobody can handle those cigarettes without wanting to smoke one, Speaker. Let me tell you, a lot of flavoured tobacco disappeared from my office, with people looking quite sheepish, because the moment you start to handle them, you want to smoke them. This is exactly what they want to do. Let's get rid of this—the sooner the better. Flavour includes menthol.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to join the conversation this afternoon and to follow the member from London West on Bill 45.

This is a bill that is directed to the next generation. I agree with that statement that the member from London West has made. Certainly, it is about denormalizing smoking.

I grew up in an era where smoking was completely normalized, I would say. I can remember my doctor smoking, my teachers smoking in the classroom and professors smoking. As the member from Perth–Wellington mentioned, many actors and celebrities are smoking on television, smoking in movies and creating that celebrity status.

When I was a teenager, I think for women, and young women in particular, smoking meant you were up with the times. You were a more modern youth, and not—because we didn't know as much as we know today about the harmful effects of smoking. Definitely, today, we know.

We cannot allow this to go back to the way it was. I think it is true that we should look at some of the laws that we have, especially in regard to advertising, but we also have to do everything we can here in this Legislature to protect the future generations, the young generations, hoping that they will never pick up these bad habits and that we can learn from the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member from London West for her reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the member for Perth–Wellington, the member for Nickel Belt and the member for York South–Weston for their comments on my remarks.

A couple of things: The member for Perth–Wellington, I really appreciate your acknowledgment and recognition of our pages and the importance of engaging young people as champions in the fight against cancer and preventing young people from taking up smoking. Certainly, young people are going to be critical as ambassadors to get the message out and prevent other young people from becoming smokers.

1430

Also, a very interesting comment about media images of smoking—I know that the Canadian Cancer Society has looked at getting restricted ratings on movies that include smoking. It is a very dangerous thing, because it is going back to the normalization of smoking that we have worked so hard to prevent. So I agree that is something we should look at.

The member for Nickel Belt also makes the great observation that this is an incredible opportunity we have before us to do everything possible, as the member for York South–Weston said, to address this issue in this legislation now, at this time. When this legislation goes ahead, we need to be very clear that menthol will be included in the ban on flavoured tobacco products, not in two years' time, but now.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the comments of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about the importance of strengthening enforcement. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the members from Scarborough Southwest, Northumberland–Quinte West and Brampton–Springdale.

Many of us are going to speak about aspects of the bill. I'd like to talk about what this bill does. I'd like to talk about that from some of the things that have happened to me in my life.

I'd like to begin by talking about two people I knew in my working life, both of whom were smokers; both of whom worked for the same company I did. One worked for me directly, and in the 1980s, when we decided to make the workplace non-smoking, if I was looking for my assistant, I would often have to go down to the designated smoking section in the cafeteria.

Ultimately, she managed to kick the smoking habit, but it took her years. Then one day, at one of the occasional reunions, I was asking about her and was told, "Well, she passed away." The reason? Lung cancer.

There was another one, named Donna, who was a good friend of mine. I would often attend a music festival in the Qu'Appelle Valley, where she hosted a whole bunch of the gang from work at her sister's home. One day, I was sitting at home and the phone rang. It was her.

I said, "That's not your number. Where are you calling from?"

She said, "I'm calling you from the hospital."

"Is there anything wrong?"

"Well, yes."

"What's wrong?"

"I have cancer."

Within the span of about four months, she too passed away—a needless death, because this was a vibrant, intelligent young woman who just couldn't kick the smoking habit.

When I've been in classrooms, I've often asked some of the students, particularly my high school students, "How many of you here will admit to smoking?" Maybe a dozen hands go up. I'll say, "Has somebody got a coin?" And I'll just flip the coin and I'll say, "Call it." They'll call heads or tails, and I'll say, "All right, all of you who have said that you're smokers: This half of you just got cancer; this half of you didn't get cancer. Now, let's take those of you who do get cancer. Let's flip the coin again. You call it." They'll call it, and I'll say, "That half of you, the cancer just killed you. The other half of you, you had cancer, but you got over it."

Those are the odds you are playing if you decide, as a young person, that you want to light up and you think you can beat it. You can't. If you think you can quit, you can't. You'll be no more or less successful than the generations before you. Half of you who become habitual smokers will develop cancer, and of that half of you who develop cancer, it will kill half. That's what we're trying to do in this bill: to have a few hundred thousand people in the province of Ontario continue to live healthy, normal lives. That's the reason for this crackdown on menthol.

There is no benefit to be gained from smoking—none whatsoever. Some of the folks I have met from rural Ontario have referred to the days when they formerly grew tobacco—because a lot of the farmers have moved away from it now. They said, “You know, I understand what it was that I gave up. I support the reason for giving up growing tobacco, but let’s understand the economics of growing tobacco. For us, it was like planting gold.” That’s the value that the cigarette industry places on the crop.

For anybody who starts smoking, if smoking kills you, do you think a single tobacco executive is going to be at your funeral? Do you think a single tobacco company is going to offer you any form of compensation? They won’t. To them, you’re just a statistic.

Speaker, that’s how I feel about smoking. I think it’s a reprehensible habit, and if this bill is able to advance the cessation of smoking just a small amount, it will have been worth all of our time here.

I’m glad all three parties are going to support this bill. Let’s get it to committee. I’m looking forward to its passage and its enactment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It’s a pleasure to be able to speak today for a few minutes on Bill 45. As others have mentioned, this is An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

There’s a lot to talk of here. I could go on for quite a long period of time, but I just want to make a few points here regarding the cigarette part, which my colleague mentioned earlier. You cannot be healthy if you smoke a cigarette—bottom line. You cannot be healthy. I’m sorry if there are smokers in this room or elsewhere, but I was told a long time ago that you cannot be healthy if you smoke a cigarette—bottom line.

Secondly, I remember when they first started introducing labelling on food products. I started to pay more attention in the last few years, and you start to realize how much fat is in a product and how much sodium is in a product. One of the interesting ones is a Big Mac. If you take a Big Mac, it comes with 234 calories, which is quite a lot of calories. It also contains quite a bit of sodium, or salt—454 milligrams of salt or sodium.

There’s a whole bunch of products that have a high percentage of sodium and a high percentage of fat. It’s not the good fat; it’s the bad fat. Because we also have some good fat that is found in various products, such as avocados.

What I like about this bill is that it works on beginning to put the onus on these companies that are selling the products to list what’s inside those products. If someone wants to lose weight—and I have lost some—you have to start reading and paying attention to what’s healthy and what’s not.

I love Häagen-Dazs ice cream. No offence to Häagen-Dazs or anyone out there—Häagen-Dazs tastes great, but

it has a lot of calories and a lot of fat inside an ice cream bar or a container of Häagen-Dazs ice cream; the same with other brands of ice cream. People just don’t know. As was mentioned earlier about the smoking part, we’re becoming more and more aware of it. That’s been covered by other people here, so I want to focus on the part of the bill here that makes the healthier choices with regard to food.

Basically, owners and operators of regulated food-service premises are required to display the number of calories in each standard food item sold at the premises as well as any other information required by the regulations. I’m really happy with the fat part because when you’re younger, you can burn the fat off more easily. As you age, your body slows down in producing muscle and, instead, makes more fat. That’s the way it goes.

A person has to start to educate themselves on what is healthy and what is not. Things like broccoli, which some people don’t like, are healthy. Carrots are healthy, and all sorts of vegetables are healthy. If one starts at a young age to put it into their head to eat those kinds of products, that’s a good way, too, to start avoiding some of the bad products. When you start programming your brain to think, “I’ll eat bacon today”—and no offence to the farmers who make bacon. Unfortunately, certain parts have a lot of fat in the bacon and other meat products as well.

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Interjection.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Well, cholesterol tastes good; that’s the bottom line. Someone told me that the thing about cholesterol, even though it’s bad for you, it’s very tasty. If you go down a list of products, a lot of them that are tasty—ice cream, bacon, hot dogs and so on; those sausages that street vendors sell—have a high amount of cholesterol, and they’re tasty. People want to eat those products because they’re tasty, but they contain a lot of cholesterol, and cholesterol is very tasty. People have to start understanding that, that these products—I don’t mind; I’ll have bacon and eggs on the weekend once in a while. I don’t want the bacon to be made of turkey; I like the real bacon—but make it less in your daily, monthly or weekly eating schedule. I don’t want to be eating broccoli every day. I don’t want to be eating Brussels sprouts every day, but if you start realizing they’re good for you, and don’t harm your body—the sooner the better.

I know there are other speakers on this bill and I’d rather have them speak in more detail. Basically, I’ll wrap up by just saying that this is a great bill. I fully support it and hopefully it will go to committee and then come back up here for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Again, it’s a pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 45. I’m delighted that we seem to have consensus around the House, yes? It’s non-fattening; it’s good for you.

A couple of things: Just a week or so ago, during constit week—I know all of us here appreciate being back in our riding to meet with our constituents—I had two interesting conversations that I want to bring forward to the House. One was with Karen White, a local volunteer with the cancer society in Quinte. She's very, very committed to the cause of raising money for the cancer society, but just as important if not more important, is to help come up with a cure, and the whole cancer awareness. We had a discussion about Bill 45, because that's of interest to them. Of course, the whole smoking cessation and e-cigarettes—we spent quite a bit of time. Her final words to me on that piece was the fact we cannot do things fast enough when we're trying to improve health for our kids and us adults as well. So it was the right time for us to have that discussion.

I also had the opportunity to talk to a former medical officer of health for Northumberland, Kawartha and Peterborough, I believe; the title is HKPR. Dr. Hukowich—I've known him for a long time; I happened to sit on a board of health back in my municipal days—is very, very supportive of what we're trying to do. I remember the days when I sat on the board, about him—and this is going back 12 to 15 years ago—how even then he was so passionate about the whole smoking piece and, of course, the food that we consume. It's really sort of timely.

Speaker, we talk about tobacco companies and tobacco. I represent an area where tobacco was a major crop for farmers. I remember being in this place eight, nine, 10 years ago when we talked about how we help the farmers out who are virtually going to get out of tobacco. As bad as it may sound, I mean, this was their livelihood. That's what their forefathers—and we have still up a number, although it's kind of decaying, of smokehouses, drying houses for tobacco. Speaker, I can tell you, during the campaign, as I visited some of the rural portion of my riding where tobacco was a staple for farmers, there was still some old equipment sitting in the sheds, rusting away.

I'll tell you what's happened on that particular phenomenon. I think some of us had the pleasure, not too long ago—two, three weeks ago—of having a gentleman visit Queen's Park who had won the Premier's award for innovation in agriculture for all of Ontario. He grows kale. We know it's a healthy product. It looks somewhat like a cabbage—not a cabbage, but—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Spinach.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi:—spinach, and it's got a very long growing season. As long as the ground is not frozen, you can grow kale. He went a step beyond. He's now processing kale into kale chips. I think we all had the opportunity—all caucuses—of tasting some of those kale chips.

I was talking to Adrian just on Friday. He has now opened up this facility where they're actually processing—they're virtually shipping almost all over the world. It's something that started with a 10-acre plot in Castleton, just north of Colborne, where the Big Apple is, and he has turned that into a real business.

He anticipates that, I believe, by the year 2019, there will be 1,000 acres of kale in Northumberland county and the surrounding area. We're talking 1,000 acres of a new product which is very, very healthy.

This legislation, combined with some of the advancements we've made in the last few years—I think we're in a good place, but we need to do better. I look forward to this legislation getting by the House and getting it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton–Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand up today in the House to speak to this bill. Our minister and our ministry are committed to keeping Ontarians healthy. As a government, we have pledged to reduce our tobacco use to be the lowest in the country.

We know that it's so important what we expose our kids to, what we expose our students to. Coming from a school trustee background, I will say that we always tried to teach the students in our schools about making strong and healthy choices, and this would continue to help them make those healthy choices.

This is going to support what the Ontario government has done in the past by introducing healthy eating habits within our schools, by introducing healthy products in our cafeterias. It was a changeover. It did take a while and some adjustment, but our students adjusted and we did have better options for the children to lead healthy lifestyles.

We know that healthy kids turn out to be healthy adults, and a better start for our kids is better for our health care system in the long run. Our kids, if they're given the right options, if they're given the right information, will have that ability to make healthy choices.

What's important here is the second part of our healthy choices bill, where we talk about labelling menus. Just recently I was in New York and I had the ability to see what labelled menus did. I, myself, looked at some of those menus. When you saw the calorie counts you were more reluctant to order certain things on the menu, to make certain choices because you knew what you were taking in and you had that ability to calculate without having to go into complicated systems or use technology. You could simply see what your intake was for the day by looking at the menus. Everything on every menu—every fast-food restaurant, everywhere I went in New York, basically had their menus labelled. This was a very good piece of information for me, and it's great that we're now debating this in our House. I noticed how important it was and how helpful it was for people.

The Ontario government constructed a Healthy Kids Panel. They provided us with a lot of invaluable advice, and we're moving forward on many of the panel's recommendations, including choices around healthy eating for our kids. In order for our parents and our children to make healthy choices, they need to be informed about the food that they are eating. As I said, it's so important for them to understand the calorie intake.

If this legislation passes, Ontario will be the first province in Canada to legislate menu labelling, which will help people make those informed choices. Menu labels at the point of purchase have shown to increase awareness of nutrition information and have been shown to influence consumer behaviour.

If passed, this legislation would require the posting of calories on menus and menu boards across Ontario and will raise public awareness about the calorie content of foods eaten outside the home; make it easier for people to make healthier choices when dining out; and encourage the industry to offer healthier items and reformulate high-calorie menu items. This would create a more supportive food environment that would make it easier for Ontario families to choose healthy food.

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These initiatives build on steps we've taken to give our kids a healthy start, which include the new investments in breastfeeding supports and additional investments in Ontario's Student Nutrition Program. Though our Healthy Kids Community Challenge we're supporting community-based activities to promote healthier living.

The legislation has developed, following consultations with the food industry, health sectors and parents. If passed, the legislation would require calories for food and beverages, including alcohol, to be posted on menus and menu boards in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other foodservice premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario.

It would also require foodservice operators to post a contextual statement that would help to educate patrons about their daily caloric requirements.

It would also authorize public health inspectors to enforce menu labelling requirements, and to monitor restrictions on use in public places and restrictions on advertising and promotion.

I think that, all in all, this is going to be a great program for our kids to make those healthy choices and to build on a healthy lifestyle. It will build on what we're doing in our schools already, so that the kids can continue those lifestyles outside of school. Our families will have more knowledge about what they're taking in when they're ordering fast food. When they have different meal choices, they'll make those healthy choices more and more, obviously.

I think that it's very important that we move ahead with this legislation and I look forward to it passing in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and make some comments on Bill 45. I'll comment on the members for Mississauga—Streetsville, Scarborough Southwest, Northumberland—Quinte West and Brampton—Springdale. I don't think I've forgotten anybody. There are a number of comments.

We, obviously, support this bill and want to see it get to committee, of course, where we can comment some

more on it and bring some folks in to speak on it—maybe even make it better than it is.

The smoking side of it: Thank God I quit 35 years ago. I didn't realize how long ago it was until I just did some calculations here. I wish I had never started, but I did, unfortunately. Anyway, I've been off them for 35 years now, and that was probably one of the better decisions I've made in my life—quitting. Starting was easy. A number of years ago, I won't say it was peer pressure but a lot of young people that I chummed with, I guess you would say, at that time—it was just the thing to do. Everybody smoked. My dad smoked; all his colleagues smoked. It was unusual for someone to be a non-smoker. A lot of guys smoked a pipe. I even had a pipe for a while, but found it too cumbersome.

Anyway, I certainly support those aspects about encouraging people to quit smoking. I'm not so fussy on all the regulations on small business. When I buy my gas, I go in and I see this cumbersome set-up that the merchants, the small business people, have to go through to try and make a living in this province. I'm not in favour of that; I certainly don't agree with that. It's something I would work to change. I certainly do agree with encouraging young people not to start and not to be smoking in schools or around schools, anywhere like that.

Anyway, I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to four of the members on the government side talk about the bill and different parts of bill.

I think we all agree that putting the number of calories on the menu board would be something that Ontarians want. The statistics are there to say that up to 85% of Ontarians want to see the calories right on the menu board, and they want to see the sodium. Sodium is associated with so many chronic diseases that are hard to handle. Prevention is the key.

It is very refreshing to hear a bill that deals with health promotion. They are very few and far between that we talk about health promotion in this House. This is why we have to get it right. We have to make sure that when we finally come out with menu labelling, very much like what they've put in New York City seven years ago, Ontario also puts a flag for high sodium. This is not the kind of bill that will find its way back to this Legislature for many years to come. Let's get it right.

When it comes to flavoured tobacco, I agree with lots of what has been said in this House—that very much more could be done to help people quit smoking, to make sure that people don't pick up smoking. But right now, the bill focuses on flavoured tobacco, so let's do that part right, and that means making sure that the ban includes a ban on menthol. We all know by now, because the stat has been shared widely, that one out of four youth smokers smoke menthol, and the ones who do smoke menthol are more likely to smoke more and have no intention of quitting. So let's get this right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to respond to some of the comments made by my colleagues from Mississauga—Streetsville, Scarborough Southwest, Northumberland—Quinte West and Brampton—Springdale. I paid close attention to what they had to say about this bill.

I noticed, for example, that the member from Mississauga—Streetsville mentioned his experience as a teacher, dividing the class to show them in a real sense how devastating and how dangerous it is to pick up this habit.

Also, my colleague from Scarborough Southwest mentioned that cholesterol is tasty. I have to agree with him, because in my community, the diet may not be the healthiest of them all, and I have to confess that some of my favourite dishes are not too healthy. Having the labelling showing me what's in there may not change my mind on ordering that dish, but it will definitely limit my consumption, knowing that it's not good for my health. With two young kids, I want to see the future and I want to live a long life, so it does help me if this bill gets passed and proclaimed.

Also, I want to take note that my good friend the member from Northumberland—Quinte West mentioned that in his community there were a lot of tobacco growers. Tobacco, we all know, is a highly profitable crop, but the world is changing. With globalization, now we'll be able to export a lot of our goods, and they become more valuable, like the kale that he mentioned. Hops: Hops are becoming a new product that can replace the growing of tobacco, and that has a great future.

I agree with them and look forward to supporting this bill further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: A comment: A number of the members opposite made mention about Ontario's growing of tobacco. I have an interest. I represent most of the tobacco farmers in Canada; in fact, I have for the last 20 years or so.

I worked in tobacco in the early 1970s. I took great pride in being a primer. We could take the crop off. We could be done at maybe 12:30 each day; we started pretty early.

At that time, in the early 1970s, there were about maybe 3,400 to 3,700 tobacco farmers, primarily in Norfolk, Oxford, Elgin and Brant counties. Now we have a handful of farmers, a very large acreage. The acreage is still there. Some of the market is there, and it has its ups and downs, depending on export.

The tobacco farm community took a really big hit in the early 1980s. Tobacco is a culture. They had been growing it for 100 years. Many people killed themselves. Unfortunately, they really saw no way of living other than tobacco. I know in Langton township in Norfolk, 97% of the farms were tobacco farms.

Ten years ago, another very significant reduction: The federal and provincial governments won a lawsuit against

the tobacco industry. The federal government, as expected, bought out a large number of tobacco farmers. Unfortunately, at the time Mr. McGuinty, I assume, told Leona Dombrowsky to not use the money accrued to the province of Ontario to help the tobacco farmers.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I want to thank those members who stood up to add their own thoughts on this particular topic. Certainly I was touched by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton on his adventures in quitting smoking.

The member for Nickel Belt talked about some other things that could be in the bill, and I guess I would remind her of an adage that I learned in software development that goes a little bit like this: "The perfect is the enemy of the good." This bill is out to do a good thing, and although the bill doesn't go through every other product that could be and is harmful to you, let's take what the bill does that's good and let's get the food industry used to doing something good.

She mentions calories. We all agree: Let's get the calorie count on the menu. It's going to absolutely shock a lot of people when they realize what the vendors are trying to put into their mouths. I completely agree: Let's get salt, sugar and fat on it, too—but not in this bill. There's going to be a chance to come back to that.

My colleague from Trinity—Spadina certainly had some very helpful comments. Finally, to my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk, who told the story of working in his riding, really tobacco country, and talked about the courage that a lot of our tobacco farmers showed in making the transition from what I called in my remarks "planting gold" to moving to other crops, there is no question that a product as destructive as tobacco is also every bit as profitable, but it takes a lot of courage to do the right thing, in this case to plant something else and look for another value-added way of using prime agricultural land.

I have to acknowledge, first of all, the member from Haldimand—Norfolk for his absolutely encyclopedic knowledge of the agricultural sector and also for his leadership in helping to support this bill. I really do appreciate that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member—oh, I'm sorry. I've been reminded by the table to read the following:

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. The debate will, therefore, be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader, or his designate, specifies otherwise.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, we wish debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I am here today to speak to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014.

Schedule 1, Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014: Section 1 specifies that a “regulated foodservice premise” is not only “a foodservice premise that is part of a chain of foodservice premises” but also “any other foodservice premise that may be provided for in the regulations.” Adding new classes of business through regulation versus legislation concerns me, as I know that there are many mom-and-pop restaurants, particularly in small towns and rural Ontario, that would not be able to afford to undertake the testing requirements to label the calories of all the food they serve.

Before expanding the class of food premises to which the labelling requirements apply, the legislation should come back to this chamber for debate. As it is currently drafted, regulations under Bill 45 could potentially capture all so-called fast food premises and disadvantage small business owners who do not have the economies of scale that, say, a Tim Hortons or a Burger King does. Increased regulatory requirements do not impact all businesses in the same way. Small businesses do not have the same capacity to respond the way that large corporate entities do. They do not have the ability to spread their costs across many operations. Given that small businesses account for a large number of jobs in Ontario, we need to be careful that we do not regulate our job creators out of business. It is curious to me that, on one hand, we have agencies and ministries whose mandate it is to help businesses thrive and grow in Ontario, while other ministries are regulating small companies out of business.

Again, I reiterate, the job of this House is to legislate. Regulations are a poor substitute for legislation, especially when the potential impacts are unknown and unknowable. Our job as legislators is to debate, in an open and transparent way, the merits of proposed legislation prior to a final decision being made on a bill. We are responsible for making major decisions that impact all Ontarians, and therefore should not delegate our legislative authority to bureaucrats. If the provincial government decides in the future to expand the class of regulated food premises, they should bring this issue back to the House for a full and open debate.

Schedule 3, Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014: Last week, I met with Denise Smith, Denise De Campos and Kristen Yeung from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. They explained to me that researchers and public health experts are concerned that emerging research shows that e-cigarettes have the potential to renormalize smoking and undermine tobacco control and smoking cessation efforts. In addition, there is a potential for e-cigarettes to be a gateway to tobacco use and nicotine addiction, and that the marketing of e-cigarettes is targeted to youth with the addition of candy and fruit flavours. Their presentation was thorough and very convincing, and confirmed my existing support for the restrictions on e-cigarettes identified in Bill 45.

Our office has received much correspondence in support of e-cigarettes and their value in quitting smoking. However, the scientific research is currently unclear as to the long-term health impacts as well as the effect-

iveness of e-cigarettes as a cessation device. That the tobacco industry is investing heavily in e-cigarettes causes me concern that nicotine addiction, rather than harm reduction, may be the goal of e-cigarette manufacturers. The issue is that those who do not smoke tobacco cigarettes but have started smoking e-cigarettes could potentially form a lifelong addiction to nicotine.

Sales of e-cigarettes are estimated to reach approximately \$3 billion worldwide by 2015. Although precise usage is difficult to estimate, a number of research studies identify that e-cigarette users include children, youth, current smokers and non-smokers in Canada: 3% of adults are current users, 8% have tried e-cigarettes, 16% of young adults had used e-cigarettes in the past, 18% of Quebec non-tobacco-smoking high school students had tried e-cigarettes, and 31% were interested in trying them. Given that those numbers will likely continue to increase into the foreseeable future, a cautious approach is needed. Similar to contraband cigarettes, we do not know what specific ingredients in what specific amounts are included in e-cigarettes, given the lack of safety requirements regarding product development, ingredient disclosure, information on nicotine levels and risk of abuse.

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Contraband tobacco products: Given the increasing number of illegal smoke shacks popping up across Ontario and the uncertain quality of the products being sold at them, it seems to me that provincial government resources would be better invested in shutting them down rather than imposing increasing restrictions on law-abiding retailers.

The Ontario Korean Businessmen’s Association estimates that 5% of current tobacco users purchase menthol cigarettes. Banning flavoured tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, will not necessarily have the intended effect. Instead of reducing smoking levels, these bans will likely decrease the revenue of law-abiding retailers, reduce overall tax revenue from the sale of legal tobacco products, and open up new markets for contraband cigarette manufacturers.

Contraband smokes are a large and growing problem in Ontario, particularly when it comes to their contribution to underage smoking. Remember, law-abiding retailers are required to not sell cigarettes to people under the age of 19 years old and to seek the identification of cigarette purchasers who merely look under the age of 25 years old, whereas we know that illegal cigarette sellers are willing to sell cigarettes to children of all ages. In addition, we do not know what ingredients are being used in the making of contraband cigarettes. There could potentially be, and likely are, ingredients in contraband cigarettes that are far worse than what is included in regulated tobacco products, as bad as we know they are.

Closing down illegal smoke shacks prior to implementing a ban on these illegal products is critical so that we do not facilitate the establishment of new and expanded markets for contraband tobacco manufacturers and retailers. As we have witnessed, once illegal smoke

shacks are established and are allowed to flourish, they become increasingly difficult to eradicate from our communities.

Similarly, we can predict with some certainty that if contraband cigarette manufacturers and retailers expand their operations to include menthol and flavoured tobacco products, they will eventually target children, thus potentially contributing to the very situation, underage smoking, that this legislation is meant to curtail. Currently, illegal cigarettes—which are cheaper, easier to purchase and likely more deadly than regulated tobacco products—are the biggest threat to our children.

The problem is the policing policy of the provincial government. The provincial government is letting the fear of making a mistake dictate its policing policy when it comes to illegal smoke shacks. The provincial government should not let fear dictate law-and-order policies in Ontario. Fear led to the breakdown in law and order in Caledonia, with catastrophic results for a number of families. Now fear is dictating policing policy when it comes to the manufacture and sale of contraband tobacco products, with potentially catastrophic results for our children. If we care about our kids, shutting down the manufacture and sale of contraband tobacco products should be the provincial government's number one priority.

Marketing to kids: Bill 45 mandates that the calorie content be labelled for standard food items in fast food chain restaurants. To date, calorie labelling has had mixed results on reducing obesity, particularly childhood obesity. On the other hand, it is no secret that advertisers target children and that, as most parents know, marketing strongly influences children's preferences, requests and consumption.

Just last week, Denise, Denise and Kristen from the Heart and Stroke Foundation were explaining to me that food and drink advertising is associated with childhood obesity, that Canadian children's exposure to advertising is amongst the worst in the world—nearly six times per hour—and that the advertising of nutritionally vacant food to children is a key obstacle to improving the health outcomes of Canada's children.

Foods containing lots of sugar, fat and salt appeal to our taste buds, but not necessarily our waistlines. Children generally live for the moment, are more easily influenced and do not necessarily understand the long-term consequences of the choices they make today. Being bombarded with thousands of commercials a year does not generally improve their decision-making processes.

To that end, the Heart and Stroke Foundation is requesting that commercial marketing of all foods and beverages to children be restricted. In their fact sheet, the Heart and Stroke Foundation identifies that Quebec has had legislation in place since 1980, and fast food expenditures in the province have dropped by 13%; Quebec snack consumption rates are the lowest in the country; and a 2011 Ipsos Reid poll found that 82% of Canadians support this restriction. It is certainly something to think about.

What I found very distressing when reading their literature was the statistic that the average time children and youth spend in front of a screen, including computers, tablets, phones and televisions, is seven hours and 48 minutes per day. This statistic goes a long way to explaining the rising rate of childhood obesity.

To say that our culture has changed since I was a child is an understatement. I couldn't wait to get outdoors every day and spent as little time as possible indoors. So although I understand that overconsumption plays a role in obesity, we will not solve the obesity problem by only addressing consumption. It is not enough. We must also address the increasingly sedentary lifestyle many school-age children are currently leading.

Certainly, schools can and should play a role in promoting physical activity or, at the very least, removing barriers such as onerous restrictions on children's games and playtime. We should let kids be kids. Allowing kids to play freely is the surest path to kids engaging in physical activity. Kids' play, including playing tag, climbing trees and any number of other activities that kids have always enjoyed doing, is either being banned outright at schools or is so restricted that the fun is sucked out of it. I understand that these restrictions are well-intentioned and meant to keep kids safe from injury, but they have the potential consequence of making kids fat.

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Yes, kids often make mistakes. That is how they learn life lessons and avoid making bigger mistakes in the future. Kids do not learn by only ever being allowed to engage in perfectly safe behaviour. We must examine the relationship between risk and reward, with the understanding that we cannot completely eliminate risk in children's lives, and that overprotecting our kids rather than equipping them with knowledge has profound consequences for their future health, which we are now witnessing.

I am a farmer. Farming can be a dangerous business. While risk can be mitigated, it cannot be eliminated entirely in day-to-day farming. For me, the rewards far outweigh the risks. If farmers such as myself decided to only engage in practices that did not entail some level of risk, if we did not balance the risks and rewards, there would be far less food to eat.

I believe that it's time to reverse the trend of continually restricting children's play activities. Encouraging children's play, both indoors and out, is the surest way to a healthier future for our kids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting listening to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Because I know those bills very well, the first thing I want to reassure him is that it won't apply to small mom-and-pop restaurants. Basically, the only way that calorie labelling can apply is if the recipes are very standard and the portions are also very standard. If you look at little mom-and-pop restaurants, they tend to buy local. They

will cook with whatever is in season. If it's in the summer, they will go to the local market and they will buy and they will make their soup. Depending on if carrots or kale or whatever is on sale, this is what you're having. So it could never work.

It is a complicated process to do calorie labelling and be somewhat exact, and it only works with big chains, because their procurement chain never changes—it's always very narrow—the recipe is always exactly the same and the portion size is always exactly the same. So, not to worry: The little mom-and-pop restaurant that buys local and cooks from whatever is available in their local market, supermarket or grocery store will never be captured, because it would be impossible for them to do the calculation.

The bill really targets chains that have at least 20 premises. And all of those chains already have that information. They already know the amount of calories; they already know the amount of sodium in all of this. They have this information; it's just that the information is not on the menu board. The information is on their website. Well, who looks at the website, before they go out and eat, so they can make a healthy decision? I think I'm the only one.

So, not to worry: It won't be a hardship on small business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure for me to comment on the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and his comments regarding Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. Of course, the bill has three major components, and the member did a good job of going through each of the components and expressing his concerns about some sections, and pretty much his good support for the rest of the sections, because we all do want to see people healthier in Ontario.

I want to focus, however, on the comments that were made with regard to e-cigarettes. We appreciate the concerns of some about e-cigarettes being a gateway to youth involvement in tobacco and being addicted to nicotine, and that certainly isn't the intention. A number of constituents in my riding of Beaches–East York have shops—they're vaping on Queen Street East. When this bill was first tabled, they called up very concerned because of the stigmatization this bill seemed to be giving to e-cigarettes. They invited me down, and I spent a good hour and a half with a number of constituents who had started to vape. In so many cases, I heard stories of how people were cured of smoking. It was quite an exhilarating experience.

This one woman, for instance, who was overweight and smoking and couldn't get up the stairs, with eczema—she's now running marathons, Mr. Speaker. She started to vape, got off cigarettes, got off of the harmful components and the danger and damage it was doing to her lungs. She took up running, lost a lot of weight and now she's successfully competing in marathons. It's somewhat short of miraculous.

We know and are quite confident that vaping is a great smoking cessation tool. But does that mean it's something we want to encourage people to do for the rest of their lives? The reality, with an e-cigarette, is that you can reduce the amount of nicotine that's being consumed and you can reduce your nicotine dependency until you have none at all, and at the end of the day you may be just vaping vapours that give you a nice smell, a nice feeling, maybe of bread cooking in the oven and such.

So we appreciate the concerns. This is a good piece of legislation. We look forward to it moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to take a couple of moments of comment to my colleague and friend the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills and his speech. I particularly was struck with his concern about the amount of regulation that this government deals with, and I also got his concern about some unintended consequences that sometimes happen with this government.

I can recall, just about the same time that the 2011 election took place, that the government had made a change and was trying to have students eat healthier at school cafeterias. I can remember going to Elgin and having a mid-morning coffee at the Rideau Pizzeria and Restaurant in downtown Elgin. There was a handwritten—sort of on bristol board—menu sign. It had items like slices of pizza, poutine and chicken fingers. I had mentioned to the owner whether that was the luncheon menu and they said no; that was the menu for Rideau District High School. The unintended consequence of that piece of legislation at the time was that the students ultimately didn't eat at the school. They walked down the street to the local restaurant and, ultimately, rather than eating better, actually ate worse.

So I appreciate the member's comments because, when you deal with regulation as opposed to things like education—and certainly, I think, many of us over on this side of the House feel that there should be a far greater emphasis on educating rather than legislating, but I just want to thank him for his comments. He made a great speech on the bill. I know he was ready to speak on the bill last week in the Legislature, so I'm glad he had his chance today.

I'm very glad that we're still debating this legislation and the government hasn't tried to cut off and stifle debate on this very important bill. Thanks for giving me the chance to do a two-minute speech on that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I appreciate the comments made by all the members who stood up before me. I'll start off with the other members and finish with comments to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

The member from Beaches–East York stood up and spoke at great length about the use of e-cigarettes. Near the end of his time, he mentioned the aroma that these e-cigarettes give off. In fact, he mentioned the smell of bread baking and the other wonderful smells they give

off. I think that's why it's important in the bill that it addresses the limits to the access to e-cigarettes, because, as we know, children often model the behaviour of adults. Certainly if they're in the home and a parent is using an e-cigarette, the smell of the e-cigarettes and being able to visualize a parent using it would entice a child to want to access e-cigarettes. I think it's important to note in the bill that it addresses who has access to it, where they might have access to obtaining e-cigarettes and where these e-cigarettes can be used.

To the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I think he made a very valid point when he brought up how much time our children spend in front of a TV during the day. He brought up schools and the ability for children to go out and have free play and to exercise. I think it's important to note that—to bring it back to schools—certainly communities in Toronto are facing the closure of many schools that have green space, the only green space in their communities, so we're not encouraging students or those in the community to go out and use those green spaces to stay healthy.

1530

I know there are schools in the riding of the member from Essex that are being looked at for closure as well. We have to look at the impact on those communities and access for those students to green spaces and the ability to free play. I think it's very important that families have access—all families, regardless of income—to healthy foods that are labelled so that they know they're making healthy choices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Beaches-East York, Leeds-Grenville and Windsor West for their comments.

I would like to respond, first, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Nickel Belt for her comments—not to worry about mom-and-pop operations being threatened. So I feel reassured. Thank you for your comments in clarifying that.

The basis of my remarks was from an experience about 10 years ago, I say to the member, when I had an experience where small bakeries were threatened with government regulation or legislation, and I can't remember which ministry or agency it was, with labelling—these are the mom-and-pop places—every loaf of bread, buns and tarts with the nutritional components that were in their baked goods. This was going to be a showstopper for these small businesses and such an onerous task. It would have put them out of business; that was my concern. But I'm reassured to hear that we don't need to worry about that.

I think the most important part of this bill is probably the nutritional part, as it would be aimed at children with advertising from the food companies that are advertising foods that are less nutritious and less healthy, shall we say. What a very sophisticated, intensive system of advertising they use through television, and the kids watch

so much television—even on their iPhones and screens—that they become conditioned to think they should be eating and buying the wrong kinds of food.

This legislation doesn't go so far as to ban marketing and advertising aimed at the kids for that reason, and I think it should. I support this bill and everything it stands for. It probably should go even further and ban direct marketing through television to kids, like they have in Quebec.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm always happy to rise to speak on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West. I've not had a chance to really speak to this bill yet, and I'm glad I'm going to be able to today.

I'd like to touch on a comment made by the member from Scarborough Southwest during earlier debate where he actually brought up the calorie count in Big Macs, which was quite high, and then that was followed by the amount of sodium, which was even higher. So I find it interesting, as the member from Mississauga-Streetsville had pointed out, that although they certainly support that it should be labelled, that it should be in the bill, now isn't the time to put it in the bill. I'm not certain why now wouldn't be a good time to put it in the bill.

Today's debate, of course, is on Bill 45, titled the Making Healthier Choices Act. Although I wouldn't consider a lot of decisions made by this government to be healthy, like forcing school boards to close small community schools and busing students outside of their neighbourhoods rather than students being able to walk to school, I do hope this government understands that it is important to preserve the health and viability of neighbourhoods when discussing policy. Nevertheless, I do support the bill before us today.

Given that March was declared Nutrition Month by the Dietitians of Canada, I think it's fitting that this bill is being debated today. I'll speak at length about the importance of sodium labelling today and fast food, which I think fits in this month's theme of eating healthy at work.

To help spread awareness this month, the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit held a food competition called Sliced, which attempts to encourage people to eat healthy at work. Thank you to the health unit and Food Matters Windsor Essex for organizing this event. When discussing nutrition and healthy choices, we should always be aware of nutrition in schools and encourage healthy lunches for students and healthy menu options in school cafeterias.

Before I begin my analysis of this bill, I want to take a moment to commend my colleague the MPP from Nickel Belt for all of her excellent work on the health care file. This member has worked tirelessly on issues such as menu labelling. As she stated in her lead speech, she has introduced at least 11 private members' bills on menu labelling. In fact, six years ago, the Liberal government could have passed a bill requiring menu labelling, which at the time was known as Bill 156, the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act, 2009.

It's nice to see that the Liberals are finally listening to my colleague from Nickel Belt and bringing this legislation forward. Imagine all the time we could have saved if they had just listened to New Democrats the first time—although, and as you will soon find out, I'm not sure the government listened closely enough.

Schedule 1 of the bill before us today enacts the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014. As a number of my colleagues have already stated, this requires calorie labelling for all food and drink items at foodservice premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario. Of course, this can include restaurant chains, grocery stores, convenience stores and even movie theatres. What it doesn't include is sodium labelling on menus. That's right: The bill only includes calorie labelling. We need this bill to go further.

Sodium levels in foods, especially prepared foods, can be dangerously high, as the member from Scarborough Southwest himself pointed out. Dietitians of Canada indicates that the average Canadian takes in 3,400 milligrams of sodium per day. Health Canada defines high sodium as 360 milligrams. As mentioned several times during the debate on this bill, fast-food chains serve products that contain over 1,500 milligrams of sodium.

The value of menu labelling cannot be overstated. In a 2012 study, it was reported that customers at a fast-food chain who received a menu highlighting the lower-calorie sandwiches were 48% more likely to choose low-calorie options. Menu labelling works, and it is well worth labelling sodium content.

Organizations like the Ontario Medical Association support sodium labelling legislation. It's my hope that if we did provide information on sodium content and make that information easily accessible for consumers, this would help people choose foods with lower sodium content. Awareness may be the key to reducing the growing trend of increased sodium intake among Ontarians.

I know some of my favourite food choices are grown in my area of Windsor and Essex county. I'm counting down the days until the opening of the Downtown Windsor Farmers' Market. Speaker, it opens on May 30, and I invite you to join me on opening day or any day they're open in the spring or summer. We can enjoy eating local and whatever is in season, from fresh tomatoes to fresh apples or even cucumbers.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I love cucumbers.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Me too. Cucumbers are great.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Especially Leamington cucumbers.

If you can't make it downtown, there's the Ford City farmers' market, Windsor Market Square, City Market Windsor, Riverside Farmers Market and the Midtown Farmers' Market. Moving out towards Leamington, there is the Leamington Farmers' Market, along with markets in Lakeshore and Amherstburg.

One of my favourite things during the summer is to drive out into the county, stop at all of the little local farm stands they have out in front of their homes and their fields, and enjoy the fresh fruits and vegetables that are available in our area.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In the riding of Essex.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: In the riding of Essex.

What I'm trying to say is that there are a number of low-sodium, fresh options available, especially if you enjoy fruits and vegetables.

Of course, more and more Ontarians are eating at restaurants. To quote my colleague from Nickel Belt once more, about one fifth of Canadians eat in restaurants, and it's important we put all of the information about their food in front of them.

I'm conscious of my time today, and unfortunately it's in short supply. I do want to speak to some of the other aspects of this bill, including those outlined in schedule 3.

The schedule introduces the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014, and seeks to prohibit the sale of e-cigarettes to youth under the age of 19; prohibit the sale of e-cigarettes in certain places; restrict the promotion of e-cigarettes; and prohibit the use of e-cigarettes in enclosed work spaces, enclosed public places and other locations where smoking is already prohibited.

1540

There are a few points already mentioned by my New Democrat colleagues that I would like to reiterate. Until there is a body of evidence concerning the health impacts of e-cigarettes, we need to exercise caution over the use and sale of these products. Specifically, I'm in favour of restricting the sale and supply of electronic cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19, as outlined in this bill. This bill will also require customers to produce identification if they appear to be under the age of 25, and ban the use of false identification to purchase e-cigarettes.

When we're talking about restricting the use of e-cigarettes, we need to remember all of the work that went into decreasing the smoking rates for young people. In Windsor, community-based organizations such as Quit Smoking Ontario work tirelessly to prevent smoking among people in Ontario through services, education and research. We need to remember the efforts of these organizations when we are discussing e-cigarettes.

I'm concerned that the use of e-cigarettes by young people will again normalize smoking. Since the use of an electronic cigarette normalizes the use of nicotine inhalation in public places, this is at least worth considering. We cannot undo our efforts to denormalize smoking in recent decades. Banning the sale of e-cigarettes in vending machines is another important step.

I'm aware of the time, Speaker, so I will wrap up. Bill 45 is a bill that I can and will support. Unfortunately, I think it could be a lot stronger and go a lot further, and I hope that's something this government considers in the future.

Specifically, I spoke at length about the need for sodium labelling, which I think would greatly improve this bill, and I'm not alone. I hope this government continues to take our advice, the advice of New Democrats, and decides to amend this bill to include sodium in the menu labelling provisions. Speaker, the member from—I think it might have been Brampton—Springdale—had mentioned he certainly supports putting sodium on the

labels but not now. I would hope that the Liberal government would reconsider that position because clearly, as another member from the government side had pointed out, it's very important for us to be able to walk into an establishment, and for children to walk into an establishment, such as McDonald's, look at the menu and see that on a Big Mac the sodium level is well above what the calorie intake is. We need everybody to be able to make these informed decisions. I think that now is the time to include sodium labelling in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Windsor West. I certainly concur with her on the need for ensuring that we have healthy options in schools.

I heard her speak about her farmers' markets that are opening up at the end of May. We're fortunate: We've got a number of them in the city of Ottawa. We actually have one that operates year-round inside the Aberdeen Pavilion. They're very important to making healthy choices—local food, fresh food.

I appreciate very much that she's going to support this bill, and I do take to heart her comments with regard to sodium. It's important that people know what they're putting in their bodies. We've heard some comments in debate about kids needing more exercise. They do, but the most important determinant of health is what you put inside your body. Sometimes you can't exercise enough to take care of all the stuff you put inside your body. So it's important that people make informed choices about what they're eating. As I said earlier, I take to heart what she's saying about sodium and the importance of that and labelling.

I also agree with her in her support of banning the sale of e-cigarettes to minors. Normalizing that behaviour is not something that we want to do. There is potential for e-cigarettes to be part of harm reduction. However, we really don't know what the long-term effects of e-cigarettes are. Again, I appreciate very much her support of the bill.

One thing I wanted to add: The banning of menthol cigarettes is, I think, a really important provision of this bill that we don't talk about often enough. I think that it's a gateway cigarette for young people, and removing that as part of flavoured tobacco is a really important measure in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to add to the comments by the member from Windsor West. They made me think that we also have a couple of farmers' markets in Sarnia—Lambton, that I'd like to speak about while making my comments. One is in Petrolia. It opens in late May and goes through until October. Of course, the Sarnia market, in the city of Sarnia, is open every Wednesday and Saturday all year round. They're very well attended by people from throughout my riding, and they're very well received.

One thing, talking about food labelling—I think it's a good idea. I've been following a lot of that in the last month, more than I have for a long time, reading labels. My wife has got me doing that. I don't know whether it's getting me anywhere or not, but I'm reading the labels right now. If I can just do something more than read the labels, I'll be better off.

Hon. Jeff Leal: One step forward.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You've got to start somewhere, right? The trip of 1,000 miles starts with the first step.

The e-cigarettes: I did talk to a gentleman the other night. He's a municipal leader down our way. Unfortunately, his wife is in a nursing home. She's a smoker, and she likes e-cigarettes. He said, "Would you talk down there when you're on that bill? One thing that really irritates my wife is that she can't get outside anymore, and the only real pleasure she has is having an e-cigarette. There are a lot of people in these institutions who are unable to maybe be outside or go out on the deck."

I said, "Well, I'll bring it up. When it gets to committee, maybe it's something we can look at for seniors who are in institutions and not in their own homes, where they can go outside, obviously." But it is their home while they're living there. It's their residence.

He said, "That's the one thing she still enjoys."

I said, "Well, I'll bring it up down here. There must be other members with constituents in the same situation."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I applaud my colleague from Sarnia. You did a great job.

I'm very happy to follow my colleague from Windsor West, who referenced the great things and the bounty in Essex county. We certainly have that. If you take a trip down any county road, you'll find a roadside stand where you will find heirloom varieties of some of our best fruits and vegetables in the county.

I think this bill comes not a moment too soon—or late. Which one is it? Either way, now is the time.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's overdue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's overdue, given that our colleague France Gélinas, from Nickel Belt, has been introducing variations of this bill for years now. If you step outside—even if you go down to the food court at the Eaton Centre—I think you will see that it is no longer food express; it's no longer quick food. People, corporations, companies and food distributors are seeing that the consciousness of the people is changing. We are looking for a food experience. By that, we want to know not only where our food comes from, but certainly what is in it. It's an economic driver: I'll choose something that I know is grown here in Ontario and something that I know employed people from Ontario way before I choose something that's in a box.

I was listening to a show the other day. You know, ultimately we're talking about fuel. Food is fuel. Don't buy fuel for your body in the same place where you buy fuel for your vehicle. Those probably aren't the best places to do that. What we should be doing is identifying,

of course, where it is, how the foods were grown and what's in them. This goes a long way to doing that. Of course, sodium would be a large component and would have another multiplier effect in the reduction of health care costs throughout the province.

I will give credit where credit is due: The government is jumping on the New Democratic bandwagon. We're used to that. When we have good ideas, we're used to that. But this is something we certainly applaud and support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I was delighted to hear the comments from my colleague from Windsor West. I, of course, have a very soft spot in my heart for Windsor. Actually, I did my second degree at the University of Windsor. I was a resident of the graduate house in Electa Hall.

I think maybe it was the member from Windsor—Tecumseh—I was quite sad to hear that the Roman Catholic Diocese of London, Ontario, which has responsibility for Windsor, is closing Assumption church. I had the opportunity on at least two occasions to go here to hear Handel's Messiah performed at Christmastime. Assumption church had the most wonderful acoustics for doing that kind of thing.

I can relate to the member's speech, because a lot of students at the University of Windsor used to go to the DH. You know, we tried to stretch our dollars in those days, as I was a starving student. I would think the menu back then and the choices that were available probably were in direct contradiction to what is suggested in Bill 45.

1550

I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't get in a plug for Peterborough. Every Saturday I go to the Peterborough Farmers' Market. My good friend Jill Staples is the volunteer manager at the Peterborough Farmers' Market. She's also a very accomplished nurse with the Peterborough branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. She and her husband have a farming operation just outside of Peterborough: Staples Maple Syrup. Anybody in the Peterborough area over the next couple of weeks: Go to Peterborough Farmers' Market and buy the maple syrup product from Staples. It's absolutely wonderful. It would be great on your pancakes, produced as Aunt Jemima at Quaker Oats in Peterborough. So you buy the local maple syrup, put it on the local pancakes made in Peterborough and you would have a really great breakfast. It's very nutritious and, frankly, would meet all of the objectives that are outlined in Bill 45.

I want to thank my friend from Windsor West for a very articulate speech this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank all the members who stood up and spoke to the comments that I shared. I

noticed a common theme to the comments, and that seems to be farmers' markets. It's almost like we've got a battle of the farmers' markets going on now. I'm afraid someday we're all going to come in here and start throwing produce at each other.

Interjection: That would be fun.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It would be fun. I'm not sure it's entirely respectful, but it would be fun.

I think the common theme to all the comments was the access to healthy foods. I would hope that we'd look at different income levels and ensure that people from all income levels have access to healthy foods, that when they walk into a restaurant they are able to look at a menu and ideally be able to see not just what's included in the bill but also see the sodium content, especially those who have issues with high blood pressure or other related health issues with sodium intake. Again, I would make the plea because I heard several times on the other side that they support having sodium labelling.

I should correct my record. I believe I mentioned the wrong member. It was the member for Mississauga—Streetsville who said that he would certainly support having sodium labelling, but just not now. I would ask that the government side reconsider that and answer why. Why not now? Now would be a great time to put that into the bill so that anybody who goes into—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You want to be transparent at the moment.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —yes, to be transparent, so that anybody who walks into a chain restaurant where there are 20 or more in that chain, they're able to look at the menu and make a very informed decision, not just for themselves but for the children that they take into these restaurants. We already have an issue with school-children potentially not having access at school to the food choices that appeal to them. They then step outside and go to restaurants and, unfortunately, are accessing unhealthy food. We want them to be able to make better decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M. Glenn Thibeault: Je vais partager mon temps avec la procureur générale.

I'm very happy to be sharing my time with the Attorney General and speaking to Bill 45 today, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014.

I know we're all talking about our farmers' markets so, of course, at some point I'd like to be able to talk about the Sudbury farmers' markets and the great produce that they have there, but first I think it's important to talk about the commitment of this government and the minister to ensure that we're keeping Ontarians healthy. I know as a government we've pledged to reduce tobacco use prevalence to the lowest in the country, but on top of that there are also e-cigarettes and restricting the use, sale and supply to individuals who are under the age of 19.

Also, of course, menu labelling, which I think is an important piece, and I know we've heard about that as well.

If we start looking at why this government is moving forward with this proposed legislation and the regulations, first I'm going to talk about tobacco. I think strengthening our ability to reduce youth exposure to all tobacco products is paramount.

Mr. Speaker, if I go back to my own personal history and think about when I first started smoking—now I've quit for 20 years, so 1995 was when I kicked the habit, so to speak. But I recall starting to smoke when I was 12 years old—12 years old. I did not like the taste of tobacco. So what did I do? I purchased gum. I would buy a pack of gum and then I would either snag some of my parents' cigarettes or, back in the day, you used to be able to go to the corner store and have a note that was written by your parents saying, "I need to get a pack of smokes for my parents," but it was actually for yourself. So there were ways around the system. But I'm glad to see now that we're coming forward with laws and with legislation that actually don't allow that to happen and that we're now going to be protecting our youth from a lot of those bad habits that we started.

I'm 45 years old. I said I quit 20 years ago, in 1995. I smoked for quite a few years. I think it was over 10 years on and off. One of the hardest things I had to do was quit smoking. The interesting thing about it is, back in the day, I went to college to become a behavioural consultant. While I was there learning and understanding what we need to do to change behaviours, I had to use those programs on myself to try and get away from the habit of smoking. It almost took a life-changing—well, it was a life-changing event in which I went into anaphylactic shock. I ate some almonds, went into anaphylactic shock, didn't know what was going on, but at that time, I thought it was important while I was having a hard time breathing—what did I do? I grabbed a cigarette, lit up and started to smoke. The doctor said if that would have been about 20 minutes into that whole anaphylactic shock that I could have died. It was the next day that I decided to quit smoking and then having to change my behaviour—so not waking up in the morning and grabbing a coffee and then lighting up a smoke as the first thing you do, but having to do something different.

Why do I talk about changing behaviour? It's because that leads into e-cigarettes. When we had the folks here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation last week talking to us about e-cigarettes, they were talking about the habit-forming conditions that come with e-cigarettes, that if we're not putting in place the requirements and the regulations to keep these e-cigarettes out of the hands of our youth, that we could then be creating the habits that lead to smoking. We don't want that. As my colleague said, and shook his head, we don't want that. We don't want our youth smoking because we all know the problems that come with smoking.

Then, of course, there's the menu labelling piece, and the one thing that I haven't heard yet in this debate and I want to bring up very briefly is that this government has consulted on this bill with stakeholders. Not only did we talk with the children's advisory panel, we also spoke

with small business owners, we also spoke with the restaurant and foodservice and retail sectors to ensure that we are getting this right, especially when it comes to menu labelling.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to wrap up now and hand it over to the Attorney General.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Attorney General.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait bien plaisir aujourd'hui de parler sur le projet de loi 45.

Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, has three components to it. The first one is to ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthol. I think it's a good idea because research has shown that these flavoured cigarettes are a segue for youth to start smoking. So I think it's a given that we should all be supporting that.

The e-cigarettes: There are still studies to be done about the effectiveness of e-cigarettes to help people quit smoking. But if it does help someone quit smoking, we'll have to reconsider what we are going to do with it.

1600

I want to speak today about menu labelling, especially because this past weekend I was in my constituency and I went to le Festival des sucres, the sugar bush festival. If you don't already know, in Vanier we have the only sugar bush in a town or in a city in Canada. It's always a very good festival where all the families get together with children and we eat. I hope that one day they will put how many calories we have on our plate. You know, it's a pancake with a lot of maple syrup. It's the fried potatoes. It's the bacon. It's les fèves au lard and all of this. So it's pretty rich.

Anyway, it's a good idea, because if you're at home, you watch what you're eating; you watch the way you're cooking your food. And then you get to the restaurant and you know nothing about what is being included in the preparation of food. So it's important for us, if we want to reduce our calorie intake and to eat more healthy, to know exactly what is in the food that we are ordering at the restaurant.

They already know what's in it, so why not publish it? If you pay attention to what you eat at home and you want to reduce your calories, you want to do that also when you eat out at restaurants. And it has been proven that more and more Canadians eat at restaurants at least once a week, and for some it's more than once a week. So that's a very good provision that has been included in Bill 45. Listening to my colleagues around the House, it seems that it's going to be supported.

Let me say a few things about smoking. Ottawa was the first city in Ontario where we banned smoking in public places, and you know what? The businesses and restaurants were supposed to shut down when we banned that, but—surprise, surprise—the restaurants were more busy. First of all, prior to the ban in Ottawa some restaurants and bars had already started to prohibit smoking on their premises and they wanted to keep it secret because it was so busy. A lot of people were going there because they were not asking the question, "Am I

going to have to breathe all this smoke if I go to that restaurant or that bar?" They knew that they were not. And since we are on the border, the Quebec customer would come to Ottawa because it was smoke-free in the restaurants and bars, so it was very, very successful.

Recently I was in Switzerland. They don't smoke in the restaurants but people are smoking over there like—I was very surprised. So if there's something that we should be proud about, it's the fact that we can go to public places without having to breathe the smoke from people who are smoking cigarettes.

I'm very supportive of Bill 45 and I hope that it will go to committee soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and give my comments on the member opposite. It was interesting, Speaker; we talked about pancakes and sausages and bacon and whatever else. I'll tell you, they're good. I mean, it's part of our Canadian tradition, especially the maple syrup part.

Two weekends ago, I spent four hours in the Presbyterian church in Listowel cooking pancakes for Paddyfest. It was only \$5 they charged to get in, so you can imagine that the place was packed. People were just enjoying the tradition that we have at this time of year of eating pancakes and fresh maple syrup, and certainly the caloric intake was rather high that day. But I think back to a time when, some of us can remember when we were growing up—I was from the agricultural community. I lived on a farm all my life. Even the city kids always had something to do after they ate a big meal—physical. I think our lifestyles have changed quite a bit since then. We had chores to do, we had animals to look after, so we ate a lot. We probably ate more than what maybe people eat now, but we could work that off. Unfortunately, our habits are the same. We still jump into these pancakes and sausages or whatever, and we have to be careful what we eat now because we don't work it off. We put the weight on. I can understand what the member was talking about here, but I still enjoy my pancakes, bacon and sausage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening intently to both speakers on this bill. There is obviously some consensus on moving forward.

The issue of e-cigarettes, though, is very, very serious, and so there is a need to have a very strong position on it. I was in a high school in Hamilton East this weekend. My daughter had a basketball tournament and I was at Delta Secondary School. In one of their hallways the students had posted a poster that said e-cigarettes, pipes and hookahs are as harmful as tobacco products and these influence our perception of these products as a safe alternative to tobacco, which is not true, and that students should try to avoid using any of these products and being sucked into media influence, which I thought was a fun pun on smoking.

So the students are ahead of us, which is actually often the case. They see the vapour stores and the e-cigarette stores opening up and they see their peers experimenting. They're trying to do something themselves, and I think we need to make sure that the businesses understand that selling e-cigarettes or vapour cigarettes to youth is completely unacceptable, and there should be a strong fine.

Listen, Mr. Speaker, everybody's got a hungry heart. We've been talking a lot about food in this place. The issue of this government not addressing the sodium content is a missed opportunity. Once again, why? If not now, then when? The research and the evidence are really clear on sodium, so why not do it right the first time? That's certainly something that we're concerned about that and that we're going to pursue going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I want to begin by thanking our minister for bringing Bill 45 forward, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

Many people have dealt with various components of the bill. I'll focus on the smoking piece of it as well, as others have. We've made great strides, I think it's fair to say, in the province when it comes to dealing with the issue and trying to keep the numbers down—in terms of the percentage of people who are smoking, I think it's somewhere in the range of 18% to 20%. It's a very difficult, ongoing and recurring challenge because, as we know, this is about an attitudinal shift, but we also know that there's always a new potential generation of smokers coming along. So the work of our government, and the work of succeeding governments when it comes to trying to suppress the percentage of people who are smoking in Ontario—that work will never end.

I'm sitting here listening to debate today and I'm looking at the pages sitting out in front of you here, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking at young Mr. Peltonen from Thunder Bay, him and his colleagues and his cohorts. They're the people who are the target of the industry.

When we look at things like flavoured tobacco and e-cigarettes, this is the reason the industry is always thinking, "How can we do this?" They're seeing the work that's being done, power walls and all the other things we've done to restrict smoking and help to keep these numbers down, but the industry is creative as well. They always continue to come along with new ideas: "How can we get a new generation here to start buying our products?"

We all have a vested interest in this. We have a publicly funded health care system. We know this is not a smart thing to do. What is interesting is that very smart people continue to do it.

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The work will continue, Speaker. I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward. As I've said, the work will continue.

Another shout-out—I listened to my colleague speak earlier—to the city of Thunder Bay. I was on council

when we brought in a bylaw 10 or 12 or 15 years ago—I forget how long ago—restricting smoking in public places. The sky was going to fall; restaurants and bars were going to shut down. That didn't happen. Congratulations to the city of Thunder Bay for getting that done as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to focus quite a bit of my time on, again, the reality that it's illegal to sell to minors; however, it's not illegal for minors to smoke. I think that's something we can do, if we really want to impact the next generation, people like our great pages in front of you, in not smoking: to actually put some teeth into that and to ensure there is a challenge both to possess and/or to consume. That's one of the things I think is ironic: that that store owner cannot sell to the minor, but nothing stops that minor if they get it somehow.

Lots of smokes out there today are through the contraband market. I think, sadly, there's a lot of youth trying it because they are so inexpensive. I was a little disappointed in this bill to not see anything in there going after that whole market.

We had the Korean Businessmen's Association in to speak with us last week. I really feel for these folks sometimes, because they are operating a legitimate business, and it's almost like people are hiding around trying to find them doing something wrong even though they're not. They put a lot of challenging legislation in place in regard to having to identify someone under 25 years old. Most of them want that; they want to run a good, reputable business. Yet there are people lurking behind counters, almost, trying to find it.

But there's nothing in legislation that prohibits a minor from smoking. That's an area that I think we definitely need to look at, and I would like to see us, certainly when it gets to committee, take a good, strong look at that and see if we can put something in there. It's illegal to sell and consume alcohol at a younger age; why not smoking?

As I said earlier in my comments, I've never been a smoker; it's something that I find repulsive. I lost my sister to lung cancer. It was the worst, most horrible thing that I've seen. If I can do a shout-out to anyone listening who has children of any age in their family, try to prevent them from smoking. It was the most horrible, graphic thing that I've ever seen. I don't want to see anybody else have to go through that.

So I do credit the minister with bringing this forward, but I think there are some pieces of it that we could amend. We could make it even better legislation and truly, at the end of the day, do things to stop any of our youth and/or adults from smoking down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the Attorney General for her reply.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier les députés de Perth–Wellington, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Kitchener–Waterloo and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Yes, things have changed. When I was a nurse working in the delivery room, everybody was smoking. The patients were smoking, the doctors were smoking and the nurses were smoking.

Mr. Steve Clark: But the babies weren't smoking.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: No, the babies were not smoking, but just imagine. I'm a bit embarrassed to say that. The doctor would go from one room to the next to visit their patient, with their cigarette, and there were ashtrays in almost every room. Look at today. It would be a real scandal if people would go and smoke in the hospital. I'm still so perturbed when I go by a hospital and see the patients who are outside with their IV pole, in the wheelchair, and they're smoking. But what can I say?

My friend from Perth–Wellington talked about the sugar bush and all the good food that is being served there—very high in calories. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the organizers of this big festival in Vanier organized by le Muséoparc. The president is an employee of mine in Ottawa, Michael McLellan. I'd like to thank him and his team and the numerous volunteers who helped to organize this sugar bush festival. When I went for breakfast on Sunday around 11:30, there were close to 1,000 people who had already been served there. And yes, perhaps next year they will have the list of calories in what you're eating. You go out of the festival a lot heavier than when you went in, but once a year, what's the point? So happy festival, and thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a real pleasure to have a few moments to speak on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. It's a very important bill, and I believe it has a very admirable goal of helping Ontarians lead healthier lives.

I think we have to be leaders for our young people. We have to enact legislation that will lead to healthier lifestyles. As I said earlier today, and I'll say it again as part of my few minutes to speak, I also think we have a duty to do a better job at educating the public.

I met with some folks in my riding on Friday and the previous Friday, and over and over again—I'm not happy with the statistics in my riding. We've got too many people who are smoking. We're losing too many people far too early because of heart disease, cancer and other chronic diseases. I really think that as legislators, we have to look within our ridings and rise to a higher standard.

I also want to take the opportunity today to talk about my colleague the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He is our associate health care critic. He noted in his leadoff a statistic about obesity, that that alone costs our health care system about \$4.5 billion annually. So there's no question—we've had a limited number of our caucus who have spoken to this bill, but those who have have expressed their support for Bill 45. I think we've got an effective tool in education. I think we need to arm people with the knowledge to make better choices.

But I do want to raise some issues that came up in the riding, over the break regarding Bill 45. I want to put

those on the record because I promised some of those constituents that I would.

Most of us know that the bill focuses on three pieces of legislation to give it its teeth—the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014, which will require fast-food restaurants to display the calorie counts for their menu items. The bill also amends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, primarily to prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes—and I’m going to deal with a delegation of young people from Gananoque that I met with in my office. Finally, there is the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014, which brings in a number of restrictions on e-cigarettes, or electronic cigarettes, which include banning their sale to anyone under 19 and restricting display and promotion of e-cigarettes, much like we do today with the regular, more conventional cigarette products. So all very laudable goals; all very important pieces of legislation.

I want to talk to you about issues on three components of the bill from people I’ve met from Leeds–Grenville. Aside from hydro rates, Speaker, I have to tell you that the e-cigarette measures in the bill have lit up my inbox. I couldn’t get over the volume of emails that I’ve received in a number of months. I’ve also heard directly from a number of former smokers who told me that it was only with the help of an electronic cigarette that they were able to kick the habit. So it was very interesting information that I got from some constituents.

I also had a chance to visit one of the local vape shops. I think there were a number of members who, in their speeches, talked about reaching out. Mr. Potts, the member from Beaches–East York, mentioned that. I went up to Kemptville and I met with Don LeBreton at the Evape shop he owns there. He told me that he’s among those former smokers for whom vaping finally ended their addiction to lighting up. In his case, it was 46 years that he was a smoker. Since opening the shop, he’s helped many, many others kick the habit.

When I was at Don’s shop, I had an opportunity—I stayed there quite a long time. I got the whole show on the different types and different prices of e-cigarettes, and I did meet some former smokers who told me that they felt better than they had in years because they no longer smoke a pack or more every day.

I want to take the opportunity in my speech to read one of the emails I received from a constituent who had been a smoker for 50 years. His comments really sum up the concerns that Don LeBreton and so many others said in their emails.

This is one email I got from a constituent:

“While it is true that not a lot of research has been published related to the health effects of vaporizing liquid nicotine, we have much evidence that smoking tobacco is extremely harmful to our health and, via second-hand smoke, to those in our surroundings.

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“Given the numerous carcinogens identified in tobacco cigarettes and compared to the three ingredients in liquid nicotine (nicotine, vegetable oil or propylene

glycol, water and flavouring), it is obvious to all that e-cigarettes are much safer.

“Why would you want to discourage the thousands (if not millions) of people like myself who are trying to quit smoking?”

That’s the excerpt from the email.

Now, I know the minister would tell me that we’re not going to ban the sale of e-cigarettes, but some people are, again, worried about the unintended consequence of the legislation, which might find fewer people finding their way to e-cigarettes and a path to lighting up. I know that the science isn’t out there and isn’t conclusive regarding e-cigarettes, but I just felt compelled, because I have received so many emails, to put it on the agenda.

I go into pharmacies and I see the Nicorette Inhaler, which to me is the same sort of thing. You’re grabbing something that looks like a cigarette, and you’re inhaling. In this case, the one I saw in the pharmacy was a mint inhaler. So there are some parallels—vapers have told me that there are some synergies—yet one is given out by health units and heralded as a smoking cessation device, and the other, without the science, has not gotten there yet.

I did mention the meeting I had in my constituency office with students from Gananoque Secondary School. They obviously talked to me about the components of Bill 45 regarding cracking down on the marketing of flavoured tobacco products. I want to recognize Jeremy Somerville, Carly Hart, Rayna Hachez and Jonathan Lancaster. They came to see me with Rebecca Shams, who is a health promoter with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. They all attended the Freeze the Industry summit last fall, where they talked about initiatives to reduce tobacco use among their peers.

I’m very impressed with these student advocates. They pointed out that two thirds of youth smokers use a flavoured tobacco product, and there are some 66,000 students who smoked and said they smoked menthol cigarettes. Those statistics mirrored what they saw at Gananoque Secondary School. When they see their friends lighting up, they’re usually doing so, they told me, with a flavoured product. So there’s no question, after hearing from Jeremy, Carly, Rayna and Jonathan, that I really understand the need to butt out of this kind of marketing aimed at creating that new generation of smokers.

At the same time, I know that when we pass Bill 45 and eventually eliminate flavoured and menthol tobacco, the products aren’t going to disappear. I think it’s very important that we have to—I know that the government is very reluctant. They’ve been reluctant for the five years I have sat here as an MPP to really crack down on the flow of contraband tobacco in our communities. It’s a huge problem in eastern Ontario, and I really believe we have to get serious about reducing the number of youth smokers. If we do, we have to have a strategy that increases enforcement measures to put a dent in the illegal tobacco trade.

Speaker, I only have a little bit of time left, and I do want to mention one final component, and that’s the

calorie posting component. It's a measure that I do support. But I did have a meeting about a year ago with Wendy Preskow and a group from the National Initiative for Eating Disorders. We had a discussion about the potentially devastating impact, on a person with an eating disorder, of walking into a restaurant and seeing calorie counts on full display. Wendy's group is working hard, on behalf of the 600,000 Canadian men and women with an eating disorder, and they're very concerned about the effects of this measure on the people they represent.

I don't have an answer on what we can do, but I had one troubling statistic that I wanted to put on the record today. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate, at 20%, among mental illnesses. It's a figure that I found absolutely shocking. I hope that the minister will engage Wendy and her group. I think we need to provide information to people in Ontario on what they're eating, but I was particularly struck with Wendy and her group, and the fact that I think the minister needs to be able to deal with that issue as part of the bill.

Again, I don't have the answer. But I'm pleased to support the bill—I know that my colleagues do—and I am looking forward to the debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand in my place this afternoon and make comments on behalf of the constituents of mine in Windsor—Tecumseh, and in response to the member from Leeds—Grenville.

Now we all have to take into consideration, when we debate legislation, the cause and effect. I'm fully in support of the bill, don't get me wrong, but I also recognize, when we do pass bills in this House, that some people are going to suffer. I know when we banned smoking in the workplace and in the Legion halls, I know business went down in our Legion halls. I was at a Legion last Thursday night, branch 255 in Riverside in my riding, and we're about to close the doors, turn in the keys because business is down. One of the reasons for that, of course, is, in the old days we had 2,000 members, and many of them smoked; now we're down to 350. But I say that, not to bring smoking back—don't get me wrong.

I was there with a friend of mine, Bruce Moncur, a wounded Afghanistan veteran, and we were enjoying each other's company, and I said to him, "What a great tie you have on." And he said, "You like it? Here, it's yours," and this is the tie he gave me, Speaker. I thought I'd wear it today in a shout-out to Bruce. For some reason the orange goes really well on this side of the House, and I just thought I'd give a shout-out to Bruce for that and wish him well in the future. He's considering a career change, considering studying for his LSAT and applying to law school at the University of Windsor, so I do wish him well with that.

While we're talking about sugar bushes and maple syrup, a shout-out to the John R. Park Homestead in my area, where they had a maple syrup party on the weekend and fundraiser. I hope they did very well.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

As someone coming from public health before I came to the Legislature, this is the right bill to do, folks. I hear all the time that 20 years ago, or even five years ago, the issue of e-cigarettes was never in the conversation. Do you remember those days, Mr. Speaker, when we had the smoking room in restaurants? Well, the smoking room is gone because the restaurateurs were not cleaning them. They were not removing the filter and cleaning them.

At the end of the day, this progressive legislation is making sure that every young person is healthy and safe. There are actually three parts to this bill. One talks about making Ontario smoke-free, the second part deals with menu labelling, and the third piece deals specifically with e-cigarettes.

As someone who had been in public health for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, and has been working for a smoke-free Ontario, I can tell you right now, we have a generation of non-smokers—which is the right thing to do—because in the old days, we were seeing people smoking in boardrooms, we were seeing people smoking in hospitals; we were seeing people buying cigarettes in the hospital that's treating them for cancer. Now, how ironic is that?

The other piece is, as a former member of the Healthy Kids Panel—one of the recommendations of the Healthy Kids Panel is about labelling food, Mr. Speaker. That was one of the recommendations from the experts. I know the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills talked about food labelling earlier. The entire city of New York has food labelling, and you're trying to tell me that the province of Ontario cannot be as progressive as the city of New York? I don't believe so. So I'm encouraging all members to support Bill 45.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do know that towards the end of his remarks, the member for Leeds—Grenville made mention of not only menthol cigarettes but also contraband tobacco. I haven't seen it yet, but there's a tobacco ad in the TTC Queen's Park subway station, and a copy of this ad was sent to all MPPs. The question is: What has Ontario done? And they point out that contraband product accounts for 33% of the cigarettes purchased in the province of Ontario. I've seen other figures up to 50% in certain areas of the province.

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The member made mention of menthol, and this ad states that Ontario proposed a menthol ban—giving 5% of the tobacco market to organized crime. Someone is going to fill that need. It's basic economics, especially in the illegal trade; if the supply is restricted, if the demand remains the same and given the price advantage that the illegal marketers have over the legal trade, they will fill that gap, and that's the point of this advertisement.

The question is: What has Ontario done? Contraband is 33% of the cigarettes purchased in Ontario. And then it raises the question: Quebec reduced contraband tobacco use to 15%. A number of years ago Quebec brought in legislation that gave the police real powers to deal with the tobacco issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to listen to the member from Leeds–Grenville. I think he did excellent due diligence with this bill, really looked at it and did some research around it—there's nothing to fault with that at all—and raised some important points, both about vaping and eating disorders, which are a reality. I understand their concern. I don't think the answer is not to have the calories up there, and I don't think the answer to vaping is to make it available to kids. But they are concerns and they are legitimate ones and should be directed to the committee to look at listening, at least listening, to the folk out there in our communities, which he did.

You're looking at a survivor, actually. I never smoked, but the rest of my family did and we're proof positive it kills. I lost my mother, my father, my brother; in fact, in our family, if you smoke, you die, and if you don't, you survive or have a chance of it. That's very, very clear. I remember back to the days when a boyfriend of mine—his father was in the hospital, dying of lung cancer. He had a speaking box and they actually used it to insert a cigarette so that he could smoke out of his throat, if you can imagine. That's what our hospitals were like not that long ago, within my lifetime, and that's how little awareness we had about the issue of tobacco.

Of course, you've heard the concerns from the New Democrats. First of all, of course, kudos due to the member from Nickel Belt: These are all her ideas. But also the concern is that we may not be moving quickly enough or, really, strategically enough, to get in advance of what the tobacco companies will bring in next. That's also a concern.

To the member from Leeds–Grenville: good work and good points. I hope again that the committee that looks at this bill will listen to those folk as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We now return to the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Scarborough–Agincourt, Haldimand–Norfolk and Parkdale–High Park for their very thoughtful and respectful comments. I appreciate all four of them joining in the debate this afternoon.

I do want to take the opportunity to again jump on something that the member for Haldimand–Norfolk talked about. He spoke earlier in the afternoon. He represents pretty well every tobacco farmer, I would think, in the province of Ontario—if not them all, certainly the vast majority. And I do believe that the government has to take some action, especially when we will be passing Bill 45. They have to take some action on contraband tobacco.

Once you shut down the issue of flavoured tobacco for our young people, the only other thing they're going to go after is price. That's what they're going to then migrate to: price. I've got two international bridges in the south end of my riding. They're going to go into the US. So we've got to have some level of enforcement to deal with contraband tobacco and access to other markets.

The other thing I want to talk about just very briefly—only because other members kept talking about it—is maple syrup.

It happened over and over again this afternoon. I also, like many members, did a tapping-out ceremony at one of my local producers, Edgewood Farms, Dave and Terry McGurrian. They've got a couple of concerns.

First, we're the only province that hasn't accepted the new regulations that every other province and the US have taken, the standard testing.

The other thing is that we still have a system where MPAC will shut down a farm and try to label it “commercial” because for two weeks out of the year, it sells pancakes after its tapping-out ceremony. It's ridiculous. If we really wanted to help those farmers, we would tell MPAC to eliminate that regulation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M. John Vanthof: C'est un privilège de participer au débat sur le projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2014 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

This is a very, very important act. I'd like to commend our member from Nickel Belt, who has spent a lot of her career here in this Legislature promoting these very issues. In fact, she put through 11 private members' bills which are basically the cornerstones of this legislation.

It's divided into three main parts. The first part is the Healthy Menu Choices Act. What it does is it forces chain restaurants of over 20 stores to post the calories of their menu choices. It's really important to focus on how it's for restaurant chains over 20 stores. This isn't going to impact mom-and-pop restaurants or restaurants that have two or three outlets. Every riding has got great restaurants like that, as does mine. I was in Steak Villa a couple of nights ago and Zante's—

Ms. Catherine Fife: What did you have?

Mr. John Vanthof: I had a steak at Steak Villa, and today I have gout. Maybe the steak wasn't the wise choice, but it was a fantastic steak.

But it's important to note that it's for chains over 20.

It's also important to note it's for calories, and we could go further. We could do sodium, because sodium has an impact on many health conditions. It's interesting because one of the chains—I'm not going to advertise for the chains—advertises that they have no added hormones in their beef. If they can ascertain that, which causes lots of problems in the Canadian beef industry because that forces lots of imported beef into this country, it shouldn't be a problem to list sodium.

We really don't understand why the government—and we support this bill. This bill is a step forward. But it would be a greater step if we actually followed some other states, some other cities who force a more comprehensive labelling, because there is more than just calories. Calories is a big step—we're not discounting that—but it's just a step.

The next part of this bill, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, is also very important. It prohibits and regulates the use of flavoured tobacco. When I was listening to the member from Nickel Belt and her debate, she recalled how when she first came to this Legislature, she had a private member's bill passed against the unregulated sale of flavoured cigarillos. She thought it was a big step forward, yet there was an opening before this bill could be enacted. Before the sale of these things were banned, the companies had already changed the rules so that they'd added a bit more nicotine so that the cigarillos in question weren't the same as what was described in the act, and the sales kept going. I don't blame companies for doing this. Companies are out to make money. If you're a cigarette company, you're out to make money. But cigarettes kill people, and trying to disguise cigarettes in different types of flavours—to younger people—should be regulated, should be banned. This bill goes a way to doing that.

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We really question the idea of having a big window for menthol because we saw, when you give a little window to flavoured cigarillos, what happened. If you give a two-year window to menthol—and there are smart people on the other side who are going to spend a lot of time figuring out how to get around these regulations. That's just the way the world works. So we question the length of that adjustment period. Once again, we don't want to hurt someone who has a big stock of menthol cigarettes, but I don't think anyone has a two-year stock.

I would like to echo the member from Leeds-Grenville. We've had a lot of issues raised in our office regarding this bill. Some of those issues were developed by a campaign, but some of them are relevant. As we make stricter and stricter laws for the sale of cigarettes specifically to minors, which we totally agree with, we also have to look at the other avenues by which people have the ability to buy cigarettes. There is, in my riding as well, a lot of contraband tobacco. We don't see as much effort at controlling contraband tobacco as we see at controlling what is actually a legal product.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There are a significant number of side conversations going on that are getting louder and louder. I would ask the members to please listen to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, as I am.

I appreciate the member making his contribution, and the member has the floor.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to have to up my game, Speaker. No one is paying attention. That's not normal for me.

The third issue is electronic cigarettes. We've also had a lot of concerns brought to our office regarding electron-

ic cigarettes. A lot of people have stopped smoking using electronic cigarettes, and that could very well be. We're not disputing that. But this bill doesn't ban electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes, whatever they're called; it regulates the sale, so it's a whole different thing. We're not banning them; we're regulating so they're not sold to people who are under 19.

A lot of those issues that were brought to my office—I respect it when people bring issues to my office but, on this one, I think they're reading more or less into the bill than is actually there because, if you need to use an e-cigarette to stop smoking, you will still have that ability, unless you're under 19, but the whole focus of this bill is to help people not get addicted to smoking, like our pages who are here today. That's the whole issue of this bill. There may be people who are going to get caught in the transition. It's not a proven way to stop smoking, but it could help. If you're over 19, they're still going to be readily available.

In closing, once again I'd like to congratulate our member from Nickel Belt for actually laying the cornerstones of this bill. I'd like to congratulate the government on taking some of these and moving forward, but there are things that we need to look for, like sodium. There are other things we hope the government will look at, beneficial amendments that will actually make this bill stronger. We do wonder how long it will take, considering it has taken a decade to get to this point with some of these issues. We would hate to lose the opportunity to actually make the changes that we can make.

I don't think anyone in this House is going to say that for sodium, for one, "We don't want to do that, because we all know sodium is good for us." We all know that too much salt is not good for us. That would be a very low-hanging fruit. I'm sure that restaurants with 20 stores or more know exactly how much sodium is in there, because they pay for it. They know exactly how much salt is in everything they sell.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to speak to this bill. I think there are a lot of really important elements to this piece of legislation, as far as it impacts the health of Ontarians or could impact the health of Ontarians. I'd like to focus on menu labelling.

When I think about how my parents handled food in our home—one of the things my mother did very carefully was monitor what we ate and restrict what we ate to those things she thought were appropriate and healthy, as we were kids.

I remember getting to that age where I was moving out of the house and having to make my own decisions around diet and what I would buy. It was at that point that I realized I knew very little about what was really healthy and what was not, and what was somewhat healthy and what was somewhat unhealthy. I really didn't have a good sense of what my diet should be composed of, other than the fact that it should contain the four food groups that I was taught about in school. In fact, I think

there were friends of mine who somehow convinced me that pizza was healthy, because pizza had a little bit of all the various different food groups.

I think this piece about menu labelling is truly important, and that's why I wanted to speak to this issue. When we think about menu labelling, it's really about just helping people make better decisions. It's not telling them what they should do. It's just giving them the information they need to make a more educated decision.

This legislation would require that calories be posted on menus and menu boards in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other foodservice premises selling prepared food with 20 locations or more in Ontario. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but that would represent a large percentage, a large share, of the food that we consume in Ontario and, I would theorize, an even larger percentage of the unhealthy food we consume.

To me, it's an excellent start in terms of making sure people are informed and able to make the right decisions. I think about the next generation. I think about my future children and them growing up. I know they will be that much better informed and that much healthier and, as a result, that much happier, with a little better quality of life as a result.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to add some comments on Bill 45 and the speech from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

I know he and a number of the NDP members have brought up that they think sodium should be included, that salt should be included in this bill as well. I think it's fairly common knowledge that most of us eat too much salt in our diet, especially if you're eating a lot of processed foods. That seems to me to be a logical recommendation that the government should be listening to.

I know the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane is also a farmer, and he was, at one stage, talking about steak in his speech, although he didn't give it the most positive recommendation, based on what I heard about gout after the steak.

I think I've mentioned before, when I was talking about this bill, that I happen to be reading the book *The Big Fat Surprise* right now. Essentially, what I'm learning is that saturated fat, which is the kind you might have in steak, is not necessarily bad for you. It has had a bad rap for years and years and years, as the common thought is that any kind of fat is bad for you. I'm rethinking that now. I've heard some of the government members talk about concerns with fat. I think you probably need to be very specific about that—perhaps trans fats. But saturated fat is not necessarily bad for you.

In fact, our move to low-fat diets can, in some cases, be unhealthy for young children, for example, if you're moving away from whole milks, which used to have more nutrients in them. Personally, now that I'm reading this book, I'm going back to drinking 3.25% milk because I always liked it better anyways.

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But I think a balance in terms of what we eat is important, and probably the most important thing, also, is just to encourage a lot more exercise in our society. There could be a lot of benefits. We all need to get out and get way more exercise, especially the people sitting around this place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On that note, I'll stand up. The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. If that's the only exercise we get all day, just standing up, we're in dire straits here.

I want to thank my colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who brings a lot of knowledge and experience when it comes to food, of course, being a dairy farmer for his entire life and from generations, I would expect, of dairy farmers. He knows what it takes to produce good, high-quality food, and he took a lot of pride in doing that. I think it's a level of consciousness around our food source and network that is becoming more prevalent.

We heard the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who's coming to a new realization about what our food is, which is what it used to be. What's old is new again. Natural foods and fats in products are really becoming what the market is demanding. It's something that this bill can promote, and I think it can actually be, or act as, a measure of economic stimulus, so to speak, in that we are giving more information to the consumer, which means more knowledge, which means a greater level of awareness and maybe, perhaps, a greater level of purchasing. We hope that that's the effect, but ultimately we hope that the effect is a greater level of health for Ontarians.

The bill also addresses the new reality of e-cigarettes. No longer do we find young kids smoking in the boys' room; we find them vaping in the hallway. It's a whole new reality here, and we—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Or wherever they vape. I don't know. You can vape anywhere, because it's less intrusive, I guess. But without science backing it, clear science, we definitely have to be prudent in protecting young people from the unknown dangers of vaping, or that gateway that we think it could be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'm delighted to rise and speak to the Making Healthier Choices Act, and to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I've been really interested in the whole area of smoking. I grew up in an era where my father was a chain-smoker. He smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, and he used to send me to the store to get his cigarettes. I was all of 14, and in those days a corner grocer never questioned it; he knew that my father was a smoker, and he gave me the cigarettes.

He smoked these cigarettes, and I never knew him when he didn't smoke. The interesting thing about it is that at age 54, he had a heart attack. He went to the

hospital, and the doctor saw him and said, "Mr. Kwinter, if you continue to smoke, it's going to kill you." He said, "If I can't smoke, then I'm quite happy to die." Interestingly enough, a year later, he was still smoking and he did die. He died at age 55.

Now that, subconsciously, really had a profound effect on me. I didn't really think about it, because I didn't know any different. He smoked, and I just assumed that everybody smoked, but that was a situation that has really coloured my view on this for the rest of my life.

I want to tell you an interesting story. I got a job in Montreal to edit a design magazine, and I went there for an interview. I was all of 24. My father had just died. I went to the Ruby Foo's restaurant, a very famous restaurant in Montreal. When I was there, the first thing the president of the company asked me was, "Do you want a drink?" I said, "No, thanks; I don't drink." Then we had our lunch and we talked our business, and he said, "Would you like a cigar?" I said, "No, I don't smoke." He said, "Don't tell me you're going to be disgustingly consistent and tell me you don't drink tea or coffee." I said, "That's right," so he turned to his brother and he said, "John, see this kid? He's not going to live to be 100; it's just going to seem like it to him." That was something that stuck with me, and it's something that I think is a message that really emphasizes what can happen if you just allow this thing to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the members from Etobicoke Centre, Parry Sound—Muskoka, Essex and the member from York Centre, who has shown us how much you can contribute to society when you live a happy, healthy life, and that is a testament to why we are actually doing this today.

I'd also like to commend the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka for talking about homogenized milk and steak. He brought up the issue of calories. I think we can all agree that people should know about calories and, I think, sodium as well. But we have to be careful to make sure that things that we regulate—that it's not just the fad of the day that they're harmful.

A lot of people who have been avoiding eggs their whole life because of cholesterol—there's now a study out that says that the cholesterol in eggs doesn't really have much to do with the cholesterol in your blood. You've potentially been avoiding eggs for the last 30 years. Again, we have to be cognizant of that fact.

That's an important thing to remember. We have to look at things that we know, without a doubt—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Research.

Mr. John Vanthof: Research. Calories is one we know. We fully agree. Sodium is one I think we all know. When you add a lot more salt than your body needs, eventually—when you add a lot more of anything than your body needs—if all you drank was milk, nature's most perfect food, if that was your total diet, I'm not sure you would live a long, healthy life. Everything

in moderation. But the things that we know can be damaging, like sodium—we should let people see what's actually in their food.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak about Bill 45 today. I don't know if the title of the bill is quite correct, about making healthier choices, in all aspects of the bill.

I want to just let people know that I'll be referring to a number of studies during my debate. They're all from esteemed and thoughtful organizations. One of them will be an addiction research report. There are five authors on that report. They're from cancer research; the Health Behaviour Research Centre, University College London, UK; the research department of clinical, educational and health psychology at University College London; the Maastricht University medical centre; and a host of high-calibre professional organizations that have done significant research into areas that this bill impacts.

I'll start off by saying that we often hear this phrase from governments—not just this government but from many governments—that they're going to make decisions and policies based on science and on evidence and not ideology. We hear that all the time. If they're true to their word, Speaker, I'm going to ask them to actually look at the science and look at the evidence. Not only that, I want them to look at their own legislation.

The focus of my interest here is electronic cigarettes. Electronic cigarettes are often used as a smoking cessation device, something to help people make healthier choices. That is indeed their purpose for most people.

1700

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act—I'll read one section of it:

"This act applies to tobacco in any processed or unprocessed form that may be smoked, inhaled or chewed, including snuff, but does not apply to products intended for use in nicotine replacement therapy."

So the Smoke-Free Ontario Act does not apply to those products that are there to help people quit smoking. However, that whole section of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which precludes smoking cessation devices from its authorities, is made redundant or put into conflict with Bill 45, because Bill 45's purpose is to prevent people from using smoking cessation devices—electronic cigarettes.

Speaker, I have a list of 38 different studies here from around the world that all demonstrate that electronic cigarettes are the most effective way to reduce smoking. They make nicotine patches look like a plaything. Over 10 times more effective, in most cases, are electronic cigarettes over nicotine patches.

It may be important for the members to recognize as well that often, nicotine patches are prescribed and are often paid for through public prescription programs, but electronic cigarettes, of course, are not. There's no cost to the taxpayer on electronic cigarettes, but there is for nicotine patches.

These 40 studies that I have here—the American Council on Science and Health, the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency—these are not fly-by-night organizations; these are top-shelf academic studies—the Clarkson University centre for air resources; the New Zealand health ministry; the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York; the American Association for Cancer Research—the list goes on and on. There is science and there is evidence that electronic cigarettes are a healthier choice, but they are being banned and treated much like real—or tobacco—cigarettes.

I would like that to be raised up in the debate this afternoon. Here we have the science, but we all have the anecdotal evidence. We all have heard of and all probably know people who have used electronic cigarettes to quit smoking. A good friend of mine, the first person who introduced e-cigarettes to me, bought one about two years ago, and he has not picked up a tobacco cigarette since.

The Oxford medicine and health journal *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* found that using an e-cigarette does not have toxic tobacco-specific combustion products. There's a raft of evidence. I just don't understand why this government would want to limit people's ability to make healthier choices, which they're doing here.

The Cochrane Library, in their study in December 2014: "This study showed that people who used" electronic cigarettes "were more likely to cut down the amount they smoked by at least half than people using a patch." It showed that electronic cigarettes containing nicotine further increased the odds of reducing smoking.

For context here, a lot of people may not understand this for smokers who have gone to electronic cigarettes. We all know that you can't go into a pub or an office or wherever and light up a cigarette, but historically, those vaporizers were allowed to be used. If you're driving your truck at work and you're trying to quit smoking, it's against the law to have a cigarette in a delivery truck, but you were allowed to use a vaporizer. Now, you're not allowed to use a vaporizer in a truck when this bill passes. You're not allowed to use it anywhere indoors.

So I say to you, Speaker, through to the House, that was the reason why a lot of people found e-cigarettes valuable and a good smoking-cessation device. Now, if you're not going to be allowed to have a vaporizer in your truck or in some other indoor covered area, if you're going to go outside into the cold anyway or into the rain, well, why the hell not just have a real cigarette then? Okay?

There are some unintended consequences here. I think the parliamentary assistant recognizes there are, and I think the Minister of Northern Development might recognize that this ideologically driven ban on electronic cigarettes may have very, very harmful consequences and actually keep people on tobacco longer than they otherwise would have. That would be truly a travesty and a shame, that government goes out and creates a bill that prevents or is a disincentive for people to cease smoking.

I'm going to be interested in listening to this debate, Speaker. I want to hear some members from the Liberal side challenge these 40 studies that I have, to challenge the scientific evidence and demonstrate—I'll be looking forward to seeing if they can demonstrate to me that there is justification in preventing people from quitting smoking electronic cigarettes. If they can't, I'll be voting against this bill for that one reason. If this government is bringing forth laws that will prevent people from quitting smoking, I will oppose it and vote against it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Very interesting comments today on this piece of legislation. I think what is so unique about this place sometimes is that we do bring very diverse perspectives to a debate, and while of course most of us in this House have already agreed that this is a good and strong piece of legislation, with some places that need to be strengthened, we bring our personal experience to this.

Clearly, there's an issue around people feeling that if e-cigarettes are removed from the marketplace, then that's an option that's being removed from those people who are trying to become less addicted to cigarettes. Quite honestly, the addiction to nicotine has been compared to being stronger than that of people who are addicted to heroin. People are able to stop drinking more easily than they are to stop smoking. It is that addictive. So there's a balance here that needs to be found.

I think the member touched on this in his own way, that you have to protect an option to ensure that people have a healthy choice instead of using traditional nicotine, but you also have to make sure that—and as I mentioned earlier, the students from Delta Secondary School in Hamilton who are already aware that these options are out there, and we don't want to actually encourage youth to even try this because then they're smokers in training. I think that's the balance.

There's a healthy tension here in this debate. The research on e-cigarettes is not sound yet; we don't have it. But we have to make sure that in the absence of strong research and evidence, which I think will be coming soon, we have to put measures of protection first and foremost. That tension—it's a healthy debate to be having, but I think our responsibility in this place is to ensure that youth do not have easy access to e-cigarettes. That's all that we're saying.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: C'est un plaisir pour moi d'être ici dans la Chambre aujourd'hui et à talk about the Making Healthier Choices Act, our Bill 45.

When I think about one aspect of this bill, which is our menu labelling legislation, I can refer to my daughter. She's going to be 21 years old very shortly, in November. I look at how her friends and her inner circle have tackled healthy choices for themselves and how significant it is. I do believe that having the advantage of

knowing, when she goes to restaurants, grocery stores or any other place in Ontario, how many calories exactly she is putting into her body will enhance her capacity to make healthier choices.

Donc, monsieur le Président, c'est très important, je crois, pour tous les jeunes de l'Ontario d'avoir accès à de l'information concrète, un pouvoir décisionnel de savoir ce qu'ils vont manger à tous les jours. Et le fait de pouvoir leur permettre d'avoir l'inscription accessible à eux à travers l'Ontario rend, encore une fois, le pouvoir aux jeunes de décider encore plus significatif.

If this bill is passed, we'll be the first province in Canada to legislate menu labelling, and it will help people, like I say, make an informed decision when eating out or purchasing take-away meals.

Like I said, for my daughter, this will be a significant advantage in all aspects of her life. She likes to exercise. She likes to try to be a good person in putting the right thing in her stomach, but sometimes we make the wrong choice because we don't have that information. Certainly this bill is very important and I thank everybody. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington referenced the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the fact that it does not apply to products that help people quit. This bill does. He reiterated that electronic cigarettes do help people quit. He referenced a host of studies, including by the Addiction Research Foundation. I worked for ARF for 20 years. I still have a great deal of faith in the neutral, objective research that comes out of that organization.

I'm wondering, with this legislation, are we seeing yet again the government going down the garden path and—I hate to mix metaphors—ignoring the elephant in the room? From my perspective, certainly down my way in tobacco country, it's illegal tobacco. My question: Why won't this government bring in some real legislation to deal with and to cut contraband?

Look at Quebec, next door. The province of Quebec brought in Bill 59, legislation that provides the resources and provides the power to police to address illicit product. This was introduced back in 2009. We have evidence of the effectiveness of this legislation. The use of contraband has decreased by 15%. Quebec has successfully reduced its rate of contraband tobacco by half, and, believe it or not, at the same time, they have increased their tobacco tax revenue.

Police enforcement—people make a decision: Don't break the law. They're buying the legal product in a controlled environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure always to rise to comment about the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington's comments. I have to hearken back, because we had a starring role in a film, not that long ago, set in a dog park. Those of you in this chamber who saw that film will know what I mean. We missed

spring fling last year, but I can tell you that that was a moment in cinematic history.

As to his comments, I have to disagree. In this bill, we see the hard work of our member from Nickel Belt—a lot of hard work—and a lot of what should have been done, truly, 10 years ago, in terms of regulatory change. Where vaping is concerned, really all this bill does is deny it to children. It just denies it to children.

I would actually challenge the member, because I don't believe that the manufacturers and those who are involved in the vaping industry would want their product to be used by children. I don't think it's in their best interests either. That was not how that was designed. It was designed as a substitute for smoking and/or a way of getting off smoking—that's the point of it—not to bring new smokers into the fold. That's the part of the bill that, of course, we would support as well. It says nothing about anything else.

In terms of calorie counting: again, important; again, necessary; again, done in many other jurisdictions. In fact, every part of this bill, again, modelled on the member from Nickel Belt's many bills over the years, actually makes this a safer province to live in and grow up in. That's the point. That's simply the point.

As we've said many times, we're going to support it. Of course, voices need to be heard, and I think we've all talked about that. But to say you're not going to support it, I think, is the wrong way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I return to the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to address a few of the comments made by the members of the third party. If this bill was targeted at youth, and only youth, I'd be supportive of it. But when you make it a violation to use your vaporizer in your work truck, and when you make it a violation to use your vaporizer on a licensed patio—youth are not allowed to be there, youth are not driving our highway tractors—it's not just targeted at youth; it's targeted at everyone. If we could get this bill that it would impact youth only, then I would be far more supportive of it. I might even vote for it.

There are other aspects in this bill, as well, that I didn't get to address in my 10 minutes. But I'd like to draw people's attention to schedule 3, section 10, where we institute civil forfeiture in this bill. Take a look at some of those aspects in the bill. You'll be quite surprised. It's not just about healthier choices. I can tell you that when there is civil forfeiture without remedy, that's not a good choice. But that's what this bill is bringing in.

I have to make a comment: The member for Ottawa-Orléans, I guess, was too busy reading the tablet, because she responded to comments that weren't made about calories. All of my 10-minute debate was about electronic cigarettes, not about counting calories. Maybe the next time the member engages in a debate in questions and comments, they ought to be relevant to what the debate is.

I am listening for the Liberals' challenge to my arguments, not just their talking points that their House leader or the minister has put forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

M. Percy Hatfield: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to stand here this afternoon as the voice for my constituents in the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh. I must begin by saying that I'm reminded of the old saying, "Don't do as I do; do as I say." When it comes to eating healthy, I sport a body of evidence that clearly shows that eating healthy is not something I do on a regular basis.

It's quite evident that I have made unhealthy choices, and I have no excuse. I started young. My mom would bake bread twice a week—the best bread ever. There's nothing like fresh, homemade bread or rolls, and I ate way more than my share, I have to tell you. If we were having spaghetti, for example, I'd load the pasta onto a piece of bread and butter, and I'd have pasta sandwiches. Potatoes on the table, hey, butter that bread, put the potatoes on there, I was in seventh heaven; maybe a splash of Heinz tomato ketchup on there—presto, potato sandwiches. French fries, absolutely; chip butties they call them in England, French fry sandwiches—anything for me to wolf down more of that great bread that my mom used to make.

1720

Even after a great roast beef dinner, instead of dessert, I'd put bread and butter down, pour gravy over it, add a little bit of pepper, that was my dessert—anything to get that bread in there. I had no shame. Ketchup sandwiches, absolutely; mustard on toast any day of the week; cucumber sandwiches—it didn't matter.

I loved bread so much I would eat anything. I still eat way more bread than I should. I apologize somewhat for that. I don't eat as much as I used to. That's because my mom lives in Newfoundland and I don't find the same quality of bread up in this area. It's a tough habit to kick, I have to tell you.

I know it's serendipitous, but this week I received in the mail at my constituency office at Tecumseh and Rivard in Windsor a 50-page booklet from the presidents' council of Ontario's food and agricultural sectors, which lays out a plan for an agri-food for health strategy. One of the headlines that first caught my eye was, "Healthy eating is a skill and practice that must be learned." No kidding. Another headline: "Informed consumers are the most efficient and effective means of contributing to food choices that are healthy"—no question about that.

Apparently there have been seven surveys over the past 20 years in the Tracking Nutrition Trends series. What do we know, now that the experts have looked at and analyzed the latest statistics? In Ontario—and I'm a prime example—60% of the men and 45% of the women are overweight or obese. Our federal, provincial and territorial health ministers have recognized that Canada is in the midst of a childhood obesity epidemic. The Heart

and Stroke Foundation has found that, "Between the ages of six and 12, children develop eating habits and attitudes that they may carry with them for the rest of their lives."

There are socio-economic factors at play as well. The presidents' council says, "Young people in households where no members had more than a high school diploma were more likely to be overweight/obese than were those in households where the highest level of education was post-secondary graduation."

The Heart and Stroke Foundation tells me that since 1978, when my son was born, obesity among Canadian children has tripled. These days, 31% of our kids are overweight or obese. Four out of five of these kids will carry that extra weight well into their adult years and remain overweight or obese. That means they will be in a higher risk group, such as I am, for high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke, as well as many other chronic diseases.

Our children watch way more TV these days than we used to and they watch way more commercials on TV than we used to, advertising unhealthy food choices that are high in fat, salt, sugar and calories.

Now to Bill G45, making healthier Speaker—the Making Healthier Choices Act, Speaker. I'll say it again—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, we need a healthier Speaker—only kidding. The "G" in that should be for Gélinas, because again, as we've heard, it's 11 private member's bills the member for Nickel Belt has put forward about making healthier choices and cessation of tobacco. That's since 2008. She has peppered this Legislature with bill after bill after bill dealing with healthy food choices and bill after bill after bill dealing with flavoured tobacco: 11 bills in all, addressing menu labelling and stricter tobacco laws. That's an enviable record.

I started this afternoon speaking about my terrible eating habits, which started in the home. We didn't eat out much in those days. We all ate at home, unless we were on a road trip or something. When I was in high school in St. John's, Newfoundland, back in the 1960s, it was big news when we got our first A&W. We did have one pizza shop, the Tower of Pizza. Of course, being in Newfoundland, we had dozens of shops where we could get our fish and chips. Our cod and our halibut used to be plentiful in those days. I say that Ches's was the best. Other people say no; if you go out around the bay you'd find the Admiral's Table or one of those. But healthy food choices weren't always available, no matter where you went.

In southwestern Ontario on our 100 Mile Peninsula, you'll find some of the best sweet corn anywhere on this planet: fresh from the field, boiled up, covered in butter with a dash of salt and pepper and away we go.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hey, stop it. Stop. Stop now.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I know from personal experience that they don't have that fresh corn on the cob in other parts of the country.

Gale and I were flying home to Newfoundland one time on an early-afternoon flight—I went out to what is now a farm in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. I picked up an army duffle bag full of sweet corn on the cob. I took it down to St. John's that afternoon on the plane. I got there, I went around giving away dozens of corn to friends and relatives. They were reluctant to take it because in their supermarkets they weren't used to fresh corn on the cob. The corn on the cob that they had in those days in Newfoundland was old. It wasn't very good. I had to practically bend arms to get them to try this sweet corn from southwestern Ontario. Once they tried it, of course, they loved it, but until they tried it—you know, that was an eye opener for me, and it was disappointing. I'd just thought, "Wow, what a treat we're going to bring."

I know we've talked about the need for more fresh food and more community gardens, and I'm glad we're doing that because when we eat out, Speaker, studies show that our children consume twice as many calories as they do in their meals at home.

The Healthy Kids Strategy has studied this and have come up with some pretty startling numbers. Obesity in Ontario ends up costing the health care system \$1.6 billion in direct costs and \$2.87 billion in indirect costs. I'll do the math for you, Speaker: That's a total of \$4.4 billion each and every year, or at least until they can update the figures because we know the cost of health care isn't going down and the obesity problem isn't going away any time soon.

One of the biggest flaws in this bill—and it's actually unforgivable, Speaker—is that the Liberals have turned a blind eye to the issue of sodium in our food choices. Good old salt—and I come from a region where we mine salt, make it available for your tabletops. Good old Windsor Salt from Windsor West—below the surface in Windsor West—actually not far from the closed and shuttered Windsor Raceway and slots property, which was another unforgivable decision by the Liberal government.

It's one thing to count calories, and I certainly support that aspect of the bill, but why stop there? What pressure has the fast-food industry put on the corner offices at Queen's Park? Why isn't the sodium count factored into menu labelling? I think it needs to be there. Let's make it happen at committee.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 45 and respond to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh on his comments. We're in the same club—the 60% club. My eating habits started at home. I have a particular affinity for ice cream, but bread is probably second on the list. If you ever really get a nice baguette with some great milk chocolate—it's a chocolate sandwich. It's very good. It's not very good for you.

Having said that, I recognize the member's concern for childhood obesity. It is something that should be of

great concern to all of us. We had a lot more physical activity. We didn't have as many chocolate sandwiches and as many opportunities to have things that weren't great for us when we were younger. Our meals were pretty simple. Yorkshire pudding, though, was something that was a regular at our house every Sunday.

1730

I'm pleased to hear the member's support for menu labelling, and the whole bill in general. I hear what he's saying with regard to salt. I hear that very clearly.

I do want to address something that was said earlier in the debate with regard to e-cigarettes. As the member from Kitchener Centre had mentioned in the debate—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Kitchener-Waterloo, pardon me; sorry—the evidence is really unclear there.

What I would like to suggest to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is that if, some 30 or 40 years ago, we had taken the approach that's being taken right now to e-cigarettes in the workplace and with young people—the very cautious and thoughtful approach—there would have been a lot less human suffering. I think we have to keep that in mind. We should learn some lessons from tobacco and how tobacco was treated in our country for a very long time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to add comment to my colleague and friend from Windsor-Tecumseh. I think we all have that reality of moms who work really, really hard to put food in front of us. It would be rude, in fact, I used to tell mine, to not eat the apple pie and the bread and the butter and all of the great things that taste so good but aren't necessarily always that healthy for us.

I think at the end of the day you really hit on the key: the physical activity and the obesity of children particularly. Back in the day, when I was in high school, I used to eat a full meal at my one sister's house at about 4 or 4:30. I would run to my other sister's house and eat at about 5:30 or 6 o'clock. And I would run home at about 7 o'clock, when my mom would get home from work, and she would cook a full meal. Through all of that, I never actually put on an ounce, and I did not eat the most healthy of meals.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: It was the running back and forth. Yes, I am a Walker, but I moved to a runner.

The reality is, I think, for me and for many people, it's not so much what you put in, but it's working that off. I think one of my colleagues, Mr. Vanthof, might have said—or maybe it was Randy in yours—that on the farm particularly, we worked a lot in between meals.

A lot of people did those type of things, and you worked a lot of it off, where now we have the couch potato generation. We have all these games. How active do we see the kids out in the streets or even in our schoolyards? In high school, I still think we should have daily physical education, and that's something that I would have liked to have seen in the bill.

I want to just evolve a little bit to the e-cigarettes as well. I was out Saturday night at the Meaford community Rotary Club and chamber of commerce-sponsored community awards dinner. A fellow came up to me, and he runs an e-vapour shop. He said, "I heard you in the House, but I really want to give you even more information. Would you meet with me? There's a lot of misinformation out there and myth about this." He said, "Nothing's been proven that they are unhealthy for us." I said, "Absolutely I'll meet with you. That's part of my job to meet with you."

Again, like my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington said, there is no fact for sure saying that it's unhealthy. I think we need to give it a fair shot and ensure, particularly for those with cessation needs, that we don't ban it before we can actually go down that road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: There should be a rule in this place that when we talk about food, we should be allowed to eat. I was absolutely salivating when my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh started talking about the sweet corn from Essex county. It is unbelievable. It's delectable. You should try it. We love it.

Speaker, something struck me as we were talking about food. Hundreds of millions of people every day wake up, and their first thought is about where they actually will get food. We have hunger and poverty around the planet that's unimaginable really. To stand in a Legislature—I don't know, I guess it's a mix of emotions that in our country and in our province, one of our biggest problems is how to try to avoid food. There's just so much. There's such a prevalence. It's everywhere.

That speaks a little bit to the bill and to the fact that we should ensure that there are some protections about what types of food and what the effects are, particularly when it comes to our children. This is just a changing generation. They are sedentary. They are not running around. They may be in organized sports, but they are not in the unorganized sports that we know from the past, where you would skate on the river until your feet froze, all night long, every day. That's an enormous caloric engine just burning calories like crazy. We're not doing that any longer. I don't know what has shifted, but we have to recognize that. We have to recognize that it's time to ensure that the food that we're putting in front of people offers that nutritional value and offers the assurance that it is not only safe, but that it's within reasonable limits to be able to ensure our health.

So I commend the member. I hope he doesn't talk about sweet corn or any of the other stuff afterwards, because I don't think I'm going to be able to make it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's great to make a few comments on the words from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I think he brought something to the House today that we all probably—I shouldn't generalize, but we all probably

fall into that category. I can tell you about myself. I can go two or three days really committed to make it happen. Probably on the third or fourth day, I'm not as committed anymore. I don't know what throws you off, frankly, but it happens.

I think what we're talking about here—going back to the bill—is to create an environment where there are going to be generational changes. People would expect that if this legislation gets passed in whatever form at the end of the day, that once it's proclaimed all of our problems will be solved about obesity, about cigarettes, about calories and food content. Well, I think the legislation should reflect on the kids at school the minute it's passed. It should be part of their curriculum, just like we do with many other things.

So it's going to take a while, but the reality is we need to start somewhere. We could argue that it should have been 10 years ago, five years ago or 100 years ago; but we need to do it now. I look forward to this moving through the debate process. I think we heard today, with the exception of a couple of Conservative members, who are not supportive of it for whatever reason—but let's get a move on. Let's get it to committee. Let's refine it the best we can. Let's get the process started. Let's get these kids at school to learn about the things that the legislation addresses for a better tomorrow, frankly, because up until now, we think we missed the point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Windsor-Tecumseh for his reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: To the comments made by the members from Ottawa South, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Essex and Northumberland-Quinte West—thank you.

I was particularly touched by the comments made by the member from Essex, because he talked about other parts of the world where food is not as readily available as it is here. You can see families—I was in the Philippines a few years ago, in Olongapo. The poverty that is there and that is taken for granted was really somewhat troubling. I was on a municipal partnership, a kind of goodwill mission. We drove past the dump that on previous trips some of our members from the Essex county solid waste authority had helped show them how to run a municipal dump, but to see the families up there actually scavenging in the dump for food and to make their livelihood out of the materials that they could pick up and recycle.

Then you go to the homes just outside the city and see the patchwork of garden hoses that people get their drinking water through—we take so much for granted. And in the community itself, you have to be careful when you step out the front door because there's raw sewage coming right down in front of the door going into the nearest creek.

So we take so much for granted here. We want to do better. We want to make healthier choices, and we should be doing that. In other parts of the world, they'd love to have that opportunity as well, but they don't.

Thank you again for those comments. I appreciate them. I hope the bill does pass, despite some of the

comments I've heard this afternoon from the official opposition. I look forward to supporting it after it comes back.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

1740

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to touch on a few points with respect to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. Personally, I see this legislation as a bit of a dog's breakfast. It mixes menu labelling with e-cigarettes and flavoured tobacco.

As far as menu labelling, I've made some poor choices over the years. I'm a firm believer that you are what you eat, to use an old expression, and I wish I'd paid a bit more attention. I never did learn how to cook. I married later on in life, so that means you eat in restaurants. Certainly in the 1970s and 1980s in Toronto, any meal you ordered in the kind of working-class restaurants that I was eating in always came with half the plate being chips—some people call them French fries. I'm not sure what they—

Interjection: I would worry more about poutine.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, well, I did eat poutine, once. I guess that's not part of my culture.

Interjection: Once.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Once.

But I will say that I have not picked up a salt shaker since 1974, with one exception, and that's sweet corn. Sweet corn has to have butter and a little bit of salt with it. I've never picked up a salt shaker, because just about everything you eat has salt in it anyway, thanks to people down in the Windsor area, and just about everything you eat has sugar in it, and fat. As far as food labelling, we should probably make it real simple. Forget about the metric, forget about percentages and all the convoluted small print that you see on everything. Just label the salt, label the fat and label the sugar.

Now, when it comes to e-cigarettes and flavoured tobacco, the other parts of this bill, I shake my head a bit. It looks good. The anti-lobby likes to see these kinds of things. They have to come up with new topics year by year, good sound bites; it looks good on the 6 o'clock news. But I take the position that it's really not going to do an awful lot to curb the use of cigarettes among smokers and among young people.

I really feel, if this government was truly concerned with health as far as smoking, it would tackle the issue of illicit tobacco, illegal tobacco, contraband—various definitions. We know there has been talk in the last three budgets of tackling illegal tobacco; we're really not seeing much evidence of this.

I recently attended a symposium—it was hosted by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute—on tackling Ontario's contraband. It was the second of two meetings. They scheduled the meeting knowing the Ontario budget is coming up and knowing the treasurer has indicated that he wants to get some more money out of tobacco; he wants to do something about the loss of tobacco tax revenue. It became very clear from the presenters that it's

not only Ontario; Canada does have to face up to the fact that contraband is a problem. It's one of the biggest of its kind in the world. The solutions are complex.

Estimates suggest that the Canadian contraband tobacco market is larger in proportion to our population than that of any other western country, and Ontario is thought to have the highest rate of contraband of any jurisdiction in North America, possibly in the developed world. Again, I ask: Why is that? In fact, contraband product accounts for 33%, about one in three cigarettes purchased in Ontario. Some estimates push it up to 50%. There have been no new powers or resources for our police in this fight.

Again, the example we've heard of the menthol ban very simply, in the eyes of many, translates into another 5% of the tobacco market being handed over to organized crime. They will fill that gap.

Next door in Quebec, contraband use has gone down by 15%. Quebec introduced legislation—it was Bill 59—that provided resources and power to local police to address the illegal trade. It was introduced back in 2009, and since then Quebec has successfully reduced its rate of contraband by half, and it has, as well, increased its tobacco tax revenues. There's a road for the Treasurer of Ontario to fulfill his goal of getting a bit more money out of tobacco taxation. Again, if Quebec can do this, why cannot the province of Ontario?

I made mention earlier of an advertisement. It's at the Queen's Park subway station. It highlights the fact that tobacco is a cash cow for organized crime. The RCMP estimates that there are 175 criminal gangs that profit from the trade. It's a low-risk, high-reward crime, and, as we know, used to finance so many other illegal activities—the trade in guns and drugs; human smuggling.

Much of the answer, in my view, and I did introduce legislation a number of years ago to slash the tax rate and see how that works—see if that works like it did back in the 1990s, when it was done by Bob Rae and Jean Chrétien—because we know, with respect to the product of tobacco, that continually raising taxes increases the sale of illegal trade—those people who are tax-averse.

We've got a situation. We are playing into the hands of the criminals, and there are a number of consequences of doing this: the almost incremental year-by-year increase in tobacco taxes. Communities become less safe—less respect for the law. Government revenues do not increase accordingly. Small businesses like our corner stores shut up their doors. More young people have access to tobacco. It's delivered to the schools; it's available in the trunk of a car. My fifth point: Organized crime wins.

I have invited people over the years to come down to my riding. We're a bit of the Wild West of tobacco country, where tobacco rules, both legally and illegally, regrettably. I think of Caledonia and the occupation of Douglas Creek Estates, an area that is literally surrounded by illegal tobacco smoke shacks.

According to the Macdonald-Laurier Institute paper that was released earlier, since 2005, the RCMP, along

with provincial, municipal and First Nations police, have apprehended associates of at least 10 distinct criminal networks moving the illegal product into our province. At least four of the recent seizures involved members of a well-known motorcycle gang—I do not mention their name anymore because of some bad experiences a few years ago. It was very serious stuff. Why we've allowed that particular motorcycle gang into the province of Ontario—and I will admit that they arrived when we held government.

In the 10 networks that came up against the police, over 170 arrests were made, some members of the Mafia. The moving of illegal product from the US side of Akwesasne—this is tobacco from North Carolina. This isn't tobacco from down in Norfolk or Brant or Elgin or Oxford. Tobacco comes up; weapons come up; cocaine comes up. In return, we send down marijuana, ecstasy, and illegal migrants, on occasion.

We have the argument that high taxes are necessary to prevent smoking. The problem is that close to half the smokers in Ontario don't pay any taxes at all. It has no impact on them at all. These are the people, young people, out in front of the high school. They know full well. Why pay 80 bucks for a carton of cigarettes when you can buy them for \$8?

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a treat to make comments on the member for Haldimand–Norfolk. He really brings the heart and the passion that he feels about the issue of tobacco and illegal tobacco.

I go back far enough that I remember when we used to smoke on airplanes in Canada—Trans-Canada Air Lines, I think it was, before Air Canada—TCA. Then they put the smokers at the back, and then of course, you're at the back and you blow your smoke and it goes up to the front—not a healthy situation.

Now we know that in second-hand smoke, there are more than 7,000 chemicals, including 69 known carcinogens. Some 13,000 people die in Ontario each and every year because of tobacco-related diseases. People with illness caused by tobacco spend half a million days in our hospitals every year. That ends up costing \$1.6 billion a year and another \$4.4 billion in lost productivity.

This bill is aimed to protect our younger citizens from the dangers of tobacco. We know that something like 90,000 young people will be tempted and will experiment with smoking for the first time this year. Many will get hooked—they'll become addicted—and if they smoke for much of the rest of their lives, half of them will eventually die because of their addiction to tobacco.

When we talk about this—we could have handled this way back in 2008, when the member from Nickel Belt first put it forward. It was presented in the House in 2009. Eleven times since then, she has brought forward bill after bill after bill on tobacco restrictions, menu labeling, better healthy-food choices, and better choices overall.

I say this bill is a team effort—I know that—from all parties. We all have to work together. But the member from Nickel Belt has really driven this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a pleasure to speak on behalf of this bill and respond to the comments made by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, the member for Cayuga and the Grand River and so many great communities down there that I've had the chance to visit in the past.

The member spent much of his time speaking about tobacco. I'll try to focus my remarks in this area, particularly the notion of the contraband tobacco that comes into Canada in Ontario. He makes the comment that much of this tobacco is not grown in Ontario but is actually coming up from the US, and that, of course, is a tragedy.

But I characterize his remarks as being a tremendously public-spirited speech, in the sense that this is an area of Ontario that he represents which once was called the breadbasket—it's probably not the right word—of tobacco production, where so much tobacco was grown. It's my understanding that so much of that tobacco—some of it still does get to the US, where it's produced and comes back in contraband tobacco. For him to be up and speaking to the public good, I think, is a fantastic indication of his great public-spirited will.

We know that this bill is focusing on trying to remove people's desire to smoke. In that sense, that is a great strategy for removing contraband tobacco from the marketplace: by reducing the desire, reducing the marketplace for people who want to smoke, where it's young people who are starting on menthol tobacco. You'll know, Mr. Speaker, that much of the contraband cigarettes that are coming up are not flavoured cigarette tobacco; that's coming from the more traditional brands.

It reminds me of a conversation I had at an airport one day when I met a gentleman in a bar, during those days when you could smoke in airport lobbies. He was commenting that a fellow next to him lit up a cigarette, and he turned to the fellow and said, "Thank you for smoking. It's good for business." His friend turned back and said, "What, do you work for the large cigarette companies?" He said, "No, I'm an oncologist."

The reality is, smoking kills people. I appreciate the fact that we want to curb contraband and the production of illegal cigarettes in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to make a few remarks in reply to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

I said a number of times that I grew up in Essex county. There used to be a farm just on the outskirts of a little place called Cottam, and they used to sell sweet corn; that was their business. They had a booth at the road where you could buy cobs of corn, or you could buy hot corn dipped in butter.

Interjection: Butter?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Well, they would dip it in—it was only a nickel or 10 cents—and they'd bring it up. The butter would just be dripping off this stuff, and they'd give it to you. Was it ever good. Maybe not the healthiest snack you'd ever want to have, but it was a tremendous product.

I have had a number of constituents call me who are very interested in the food labelling part of this bill. They think that's a good thing. I don't know whether food labelling stops people from eating a certain thing. If you have a craving for a hamburger or whatever, you're probably going to eat it. I think the whole thing with food is a balanced diet. There's nothing wrong with having a hamburger at a hamburger stand, but you wouldn't want to live on that all your life.

It's too bad we just couldn't have a prohibition on cigarettes, but we certainly saw what happened in the States with the Volstead Act. It just didn't work. I know all members in here know what the Volstead Act was. It was introduced in the 1920s and was repealed—I think it was in 1933. People made a lot of money off of that business, and they still got their alcohol. Unfortunately, a total ban on cigarettes in this country, although ideal, probably wouldn't work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I can now return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback. I focused on tobacco and the illegal side. The Speaker may recall that when I was first elected I sat on that side and

Bob Rae was sitting on this side. As a Progressive Conservative, I was impressed with what Bob Rae and Jean Chrétien had accomplished, just a year or so before, in 1994, when they crashed tobacco taxes. I was working for the Addiction Research Foundation. Again, I spent a lot of time in my neighbourhood and on Six Nations, and I was able to report back to ARF that because of that crashing of taxes, overnight, 200 smoke shacks disappeared. It's a different climate now. There's a lot more vested interest, a lot more money involved. I know that the young guys are not going to want to lose their big, black, four-wheel-drive GMC pickup trucks, so there's a lot more at stake. But that approach worked at the time.

I dipped my foot in the water with respect to that in this Legislature. I introduced legislation—I titled it the Tobacco Tax Reduction Act—to reduce taxes by one third to try and stem the flow. I proposed that a stick or a cigarette be reduced to 8.3 cents from 12.35 cents, and called for a similar cut at the federal level, as did Bob Rae and Jean Chrétien, who went along with that, as did a number of other provinces—Prince Edward Island, for one, as I recall. It worked at the time.

We have a very price-sensitive product given the high levels of taxation, and I think we still have to look at some of the economic reasons for why people continue to smoke cheap cigarettes.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): With that, it's 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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Tuesday 31 March 2015

Mardi 31 mars 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 31 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 31 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this was last debated, the member from York–Simcoe had the floor and has time remaining. The member from York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to continue from the point at which I left off last week.

Just to provide a little bit of an overview, we're looking at Bill 57, which deals with pooled registered pension plans. Since pensions and pension plans are certainly something about which many people are interested but may find confusing, I think it's important—just in carrying over from my remarks last week—to review exactly what it is we're talking about. What does it mean to be pooled? What does it mean to be registered? Obviously, other pension plans are registered, so that's not quite as potentially unknown as the pooled part.

This is a legislative initiative that comes from the leadership of the federal government, in being able to provide people with a savings instrument that could take them anywhere across the country. So the umbrella legislation has been passed federally—I think almost two years ago—and various provinces have picked up the opportunity that it represents and provided their constituents with companion legislation that would then allow that notion of the pool.

In 2013, I introduced a private member's bill which the government picked up in its 2013 spring budget. Naturally, I was very happy to see that happen. Because of the general confusion around pensions and pension

plans—and people from all walks of life have commented on the problem of financial literacy—I think that this is a tool that can also help the growth of financial literacy.

The point I would begin with is that there are difficulties for people who find themselves in their 20s or 30s, being called up—they've declared bankruptcy and didn't realize they couldn't go out and buy a car. There's a great deal to be done in that field of providing better financial literacy, and much has been talked about what should belong in the elementary panel and in the secondary panel in order to allow our next generation to have a better sense of this.

The pooled registered pension plan, as I say, is a tool that the federal government has provided, and we are now making an opportunity available to the residents of Ontario to become part of a pension plan that is pooled.

One of the things we know about pension plans is that they need lots of members. If you're going to be able to act in the best interests of the pensioners, then you have to have enough money to be able to go out and make good investments. It's much easier, obviously, when you have a larger number of participants. That's the notion of the pool: that it goes into, exactly, a pool, and from there, decisions are made that provide interest on the money that's being collected and, therefore, the availability to go out and make investments on behalf of the pensioners.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like a quorum call, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A quorum call, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: As I was saying, the larger the pool, obviously, the greater the investment choices are for anyone with a pension plan. This is one of the keys to this initiative because by pooling and by registered—by the way, it would be registered in your name, as the owner, so to speak, of this part of the pension plan. That means it's portable. That means that you can go to an employer, whether it's in Ontario or in another province—and the whole idea is to give opportunity to people

through a flexible plan. The flexibility, then, of being able to take it anywhere and have it in your name reduces the sense and the complexity of people today who have a pension in one location. They've moved on, and the pension, then, waits for their whatever pensionable age is. It's far more complex. This is like your own personal savings.

The details of the pooled registered pension plan are important to understand because they're different than other pension plans. Participation is voluntary; an employee will have 60 days to opt out of a PRPP. It's interesting to note that in Britain where they have a NEST program, their opt-out is 8% of people.

The contributions can be voluntary by employers, and the employer, then, would determine whether or not to contribute to the employees' PRPP—again, giving choice and the possibility that, when appropriate, an employer may want to contribute. It would certainly put them in a more competitive market for employees.

As I mentioned, one of the most important features is the portability and the ability to move with the employee when changing jobs.

The contributions would be locked in until an individual reaches the retirement age of 55.

0910

The other thing that we hear often about—the RRSPs, and the space that's left in them, that people don't put the full amount in, and the costs and things like that—all of these are taken into account when you look at a pooled investment system. Individuals have their accounts in a pooled plan for investment purposes. That means that you have low cost and better investment. PRPPs provide professional investment management at a low cost to plan members by pooling the funds of all the individual accounts for investment purposes, as well as limiting the investment options provided to plan members. A plan member can choose 100% in one category, or different categories and different percentages, and that means then they have the choice and the control.

Similar to registered pension plan contributions, employer PRPP contributions as well as employee contributions are tax-deductible. Contributions are not subject to employer health tax, employer insurance premiums, Canada Pension Plan contributions or workers' compensation premiums. It's very important to see that this is avoiding—which is legal—some of these other costs.

PRPP members' contribution rates would be determined by the plan administrator.

There's a general interest in the PRPPs, and we should look at some of the interest that others have taken in this. The first one that I'd like to use is the Portfolio Management Association of Canada. They have written to the government in support of PRPPs. They've also written to the government opposing the Ontario registered pension plan. Probably no other group understands the value of PRPPs and the dangers of an Ontario pension plan to Ontario.

This is an excerpt from a letter to Minister Hunter: "We are pleased that Ontario has recognized the advan-

tages of a PRPP program and has moved forward with PRPP legislation. PRPPs provide the opportunity to participate in a simple and straightforward pension plan."

The portfolio managers continue: "PMAC has been an active supporter of the development of the PRPP federal framework and believes it is a better retirement savings vehicle versus comprehensive or overhaul changes to CPP or the" Ontario registered plan.

"We believe that PRPPs provide more flexibility and choice for Canadians and their employers in how they save for retirement and leverage off the existing infrastructure around the administration of similar plans.

By leveraging off the existing systems/staffing/training and servicing resources that many financial institutions have already developed in virtually all the cities and towns in Canada, this will seemingly greatly accelerate the rollout time to launch PRPPs, and ultimately improve overall cost-effectiveness (i.e. same resources already in place, servicing the \$100 billion in the 50,000" defined contribution and group RRSP "plans, and the hundreds of billions" of dollars "in individual RRSP plans serviced by some of these entities so these costs can be spread over this existing asset base). This will also further strengthen the three pillars around retirement funding for Canadians.

"It is important for governments at the two senior levels in Canada to realize that there are other safety nets besides pension plans. In addition to the \$1.6 trillion in pension assets in Canada and the non-registered savings of Canadians, the RRSP/RRIF/TFSAs pool of assets now exceeds \$1.4 trillion. As at 2012, these registered plans are growing almost \$70 billion a year on new contributions alone. Furthermore, the unused room for RRSP now looks to be \$828 billion, and many policy objectives could be obtained if the government could incentivize Canadians to utilize this unused asset."

Another supporter is Advocis, and they write, "Advocis is not in favour of a mandatory supplemental provincial pension plan as described in the consultation paper that does not allow for a level playing field with the private sector's long-established group RRSPs and DC plans....

"In principle, Advocis therefore supports the Ontario government's intention to introduce PRPPs as an example of how the private sector can work with government to develop solutions to pressing long-term financial challenges that affect all Canadians ... thus the efforts of the Ontario government to engage with the federal ... framework and its emerging provincial counterparts are to be lauded."

That was Advocis on February 13, 2015.

"Modernizing our retirement income system to ensure Canadians can save more for their retirement is among the most important jobs....

"This is why the Association of Canadian Pension Management ... has championed the concept of pooled registered pension plans.... ACPM believes that this kind of innovative new arrangement is key to creating the kind of retirement security that working Canadians deserve."

That's from Chris Brown, the president of the Association of Canadian Pension Management.

I think the last quote from the Association of Canadian Pension Management captures the essence of this issue. We need to modernize our retirement income system to ensure it is sustainable and makes sense for future generations. As the reality of employment and workplaces change, with employees switching jobs more frequently, we need to ensure that we create a savings culture.

The PRPP would surely go further in promoting a savings culture rather than an ORPP, which will be mandatory and will not give people a choice in their retirement savings plan.

Today, if Ontario passes the PRPP legislation, almost 90% of Canadians will have access to PRPPs. This will likely lower the administration costs of the pooled registered plans, increase the potential purchasing power of the plans and reduce barriers of interprovincial movement and trade. We need Ontario to be part of the Canadian PRPP landscape, as the more contributors to a pension plan, the better the investment opportunity and returns, meaning a healthy pension fund.

Currently, there are many pensions with unfunded liability, which means that if the pension fund were to be wrapped up today, it would not be able to fulfill its payment promises. PRPPs are a promising addition to the array of retirement savings options that are available to Ontarians and Canadians.

We need PRPPs, not an ORPP. PRPPs are mobile and in the employee's name. The PRPP can go where they go. PRPPs are also low cost, have simple administration and are voluntary. However, the ORPP is an expensive, mandatory, government-driven entity and, if we look at the QPP, is a model that just does not work.

I fully support the passage of Bill 57 and encourage all Ontarians, especially those without a pension plan, to consider investing in a PRPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the opportunity to stand and once again find myself speaking about pensions and retirement security in the House in response to the comments from my colleague from York-Simcoe, as she had been speaking about the PRPPs being a pooled option, which is, I guess, a step better or a step in the right direction from RRSPs in that they have that ability to pool investments and, therefore, grow larger.

0920

I was interested by some of her comments that perhaps the government should incent Canadians to invest in these products. I would argue that with the number of people I have met, it isn't about being incented to save; it's about having money to save. It's about having income security now through their working years in order to maybe one day have any kind of retirement option.

The government has been talking about offering options in retirement and options for retirement security. I guess this is what they've been talking about—options. These options, though, really are for the companies and not for the individual. Because with the PRPPs, as we're seeing in this bill, if an employer chooses to give these

plans to their employees, those employees don't have a choice; they have to buy into this idea, they have to take this choice, so to speak, and they don't have an option. As she said, they'd be locked in. Once the choice is made for them by their employer to put money in this vehicle, it is there.

Unfortunately, unlike other pooled registered plans that are actually pensions—okay, I'll talk about it in my lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise in the House and add my comments to the speech that was given by the member from York-Simcoe. This legislation is part—it's only a part, but it's a part of our government's economic plan to build a strong and secure retirement system so that everyone can afford to retire here in Ontario. PRPPs, as we've heard from the member from York-Simcoe, would give especially small and medium-sized businesses a new way to help employees save for retirement. We know that many people in Ontario are not saving enough for their retirement, and this is a part of the government's solution to the problem.

PRPPs would also provide self-employed individuals an additional retirement saving tool. Legislation must be passed before a province can make PRPPs available and this is why this legislation is in front of us. We are joining four other provinces that have already passed this legislation, and this is because the system is not going far enough. We do know that workplace pension plans are less common than they used to be. Two thirds of Ontarians do not have access to a workplace pension plan, and many Ontarians are not taking full advantage of retirement saving opportunities.

We're living longer here in Ontario—that's a good thing, but at the same time we have to help Ontarians who may, most likely, outlive their plan to retire in comfort. That is the intent: to help. This is one of the many solutions that the government is proposing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Nepean-Carleton for further questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's always a pleasure to rise and debate in the assembly. I want to congratulate my colleague from York-Simcoe for once again demonstrating in this assembly her profound knowledge and sense of understanding of the pension situation, not only in the province of Ontario, but again, in all of Canada. She has a profound understanding of what is needed for a secure retirement system for today's seniors, but also for tomorrow's seniors—the youth of today.

We in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus certainly do appreciate the ability to pool pensions and to have that ability for investment, something that I would like to remind this chamber was brought in by the federal Conservative Party. That is, I think, something that's quite significant: that we are able to pool it.

What we do not support on this side of the chamber—and that's important for folks at home and in the gallery

to understand—is a mandatory Ontario pension plan which amounts to a job-killing payroll tax. We don't agree with that. We think Ontarians should have an ability to pool their money and their resources for a more secure future. What we don't think is that this province can afford any more job losses by putting a mandatory pension plan on the backs of hard-working employers and hard-working employees in this province.

Again, to sum up what my colleague from York-Simcoe has said—and, by the way, I think she has forgotten more about pensions than most of us will ever know—it is yes to pension pooling, it is no to an Ontario pension plan. I know, in the weeks ahead, as the Progressive Conservative caucus stands up here to debate what will be the Ontario budget, we will vigorously oppose an Ontario pension plan, while supporting this type of pension pooling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think there are a few things that everybody in this House all agree on about pensions: that it makes for a way healthier society when people do have access to pension incomes once they retire. Where we disagree is on how we achieve this. I come from Sudbury, a community that is highly unionized, a community where a lot of people have a defined pension income; that is, they contributed through their entire career and now they reap the benefits. It completely changes a community. Because Sudbury has over 50,000 people who get a cheque every month—because we have a lot of mining retirees in Sudbury—it changes everything. How do we get there, though?

The instrument that we're talking about right now is a pretty weak one. First of all, your employer does not have to contribute, so I can see that every insurance company, every bank, will be knocking on the doors of every employer and saying, "Hey, get your employees to buy into our product. This way you won't have to do anything. You won't have to contribute to their income." I can see a whole lot of employers being quite happy to sign up with those pooled retirement plans just so that they do not have to contribute. It's all fine and dandy; they will have signed up and they can say, "Oh, yes, we do have a pension plan." But what will that really mean once people retire? Once you are retired, chances are you're not able to go back to the market and work and earn an income, so you will have to live with that money. That money, I guarantee you, Speaker, will come nowhere close to if you had had another instrument to invest in. This is a cop-out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the original debater from York-Simcoe for her final comments.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to the members from Oshawa, York South-Weston, Nepean-Carleton and Nickel Belt. When I spoke, I tried to stress the fact that this is one of a suite of things. This is trying to come up with a modern version that recognizes the mobility of people, the fact that they don't stay in the same job for 42

years. That's fine for the people who do, and have the kind of pension circumstance that the member from Nickel Belt mentioned, but when you look at today's young people, they don't expect to be in a job for more than two to five years. So you have to have something that's theirs, that they can take with them.

I would argue that this instrument will do a great deal to improve the financial literacy of participants, more than anything else. Because the individual's name is there, the individual will have made a choice from a group of investment choices, and they will then be engaged and they will see that their money is growing; they will see how it works. They might open a TFSA next. I think there's that kind of opportunity to have a better understanding.

As I said in my remarks, we need a savings culture. It's all very well to talk about worrying about who has a pension and who doesn't, but what we all need is a savings culture. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

0930

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just before I begin, I'll let you know that I will be sharing my time.

Ontario is experiencing a retirement security—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Sorry. I understand you want to share your time; I'm just not sure with whom.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I beg your pardon. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

Ontario is experiencing a retirement security crisis. Two thirds of Ontarians do not currently have a workplace pension plan, and personal savings are not enough to fill the gap.

The Canada Pension Plan serves as the backbone of our retirement security system, but with a maximum yearly benefit of \$12,500 and an average yearly benefit of only \$6,800, the benefit that is currently available is simply not enough.

The Canada Pension Plan was first established on a simple principle: Being a senior should not be the greatest indicator that an individual is living in poverty. But that is the direction in which we are headed again. It is from that initial belief that one of our country's largest, most inclusive social programs was born, and it is because of this belief that we know that we need to do more.

Ontarians are facing real challenges. Precarious employment, the rising cost of living, and a declining median income all contribute to the growing instability that has become the norm for too many families, and it has made it nearly impossible to adequately save for retirement.

To put it in perspective, in 2012 the median income for Ontarians over the age of 65 was \$26,720, or \$2,227 per month. The average monthly cost for seniors' hous-

ing in Ontario last year was over \$2,750. That's a \$500 shortfall every month, only taking housing into account.

Since being named the NDP's pension critic in July, I've had the opportunity to meet with countless experts and stakeholders and have been nothing short of amazed by the breadth of knowledge and the depth of commitment that exists in this field. Everything that we have discussed has been looked at through a single, critical lens: All Ontarians deserve the right to retire with dignity. And resoundingly, the experts have agreed that action is needed. But simply taking action isn't enough; it is about taking the right action.

In this chamber, we disagree on a lot of things. We disagree on what should be done, we disagree on when it should be done and, most often, we disagree on how we should go about doing it. There are a lot of things that we disagree with the government about, but one thing we do agree about is the strength of the CPP, and that strength is not by accident; it is by design. The CPP provides portability, universality and economies of scale, but most importantly, it is administered with the sole purpose of benefiting retirees. It is because of this unwavering focus on beneficiaries that the plan remains efficient and uncompromising. It is why New Democrats believe in public services: because they benefit the public.

That is not to say that there is not a place for the private sector in our retirement savings. RRSPs and tax-free savings accounts play an important role for many Ontarians, but the key is that their role is supplementary.

This brings me to the topic of the day: Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, PRPPs for short. I should start by saying that the name of this bill and of these plans serves to mislead. To refer to them as pensions implies that they provide a greater service to their members, but in actuality, PRPPs are little more than group RRSPs. What that means is that PRPPs have similar advantages to group RRSPs, but they have similar disadvantages as well; namely, the fact that the beneficiaries are not the only ones to benefit.

The Canada Pension Plan boasts extremely low investment fees because the only shareholders they have to worry about are the ones collecting CPP. Private options, however, have to work in an extra layer of costs to ensure that a profit is made.

PRPPs have hugely expensive administrative fees that end up benefiting insurance companies and banks more than retirees. As a general rule, in a private plan such as PRPPs, individuals can expect to lose roughly half of their benefit to fees over their lifetime. Mr. Speaker, this is not an insignificant amount. It can mean the difference between security in retirement and struggling to get by.

Think of it like any other product. How much cheaper would a pair of jeans be if the people selling it didn't expect a profit? Now think of the CPP as a store selling you their product at a cost. It's not a perfect metaphor, but I think you get the picture. The point is, PRPPs are a product. They are a revenue tool for banks and insurance companies, and, as a result, their benefit to retirees is diluted.

This is our concern, Mr. Speaker, and it is why we will not be supporting Bill 57—which brings us to the question of why this bill is before us today. I'm a teacher by trade, so permit me to launch into a bit of a history lesson, if I may.

The story begins with the federal government. After years of steady prodding by labour and seniors' groups and seven federal/provincial finance ministers' meetings, the Harper government was forced to admit that Canadians were not saving enough for their retirement. Those without workplace pensions—two thirds of working Canadians—needed a safe, affordable and reliable retirement savings vehicle.

At their December 2012 meeting, federal and provincial finance ministers agreed to consider a "modest" CPP enhancement to complement the private sector PRPPs they had already endorsed at a previous meeting. In 2012, the federal government passed PRPP legislation based on the model put forward by the life insurance industry. By 2013, however, the federal government had made it clear it would not be proceeding with any sort of enhancement to the CPP. So, not surprisingly, PRPPs became the Harper government's version of a solution to the retirement security crisis altogether.

However, because 85% of workers are provincially regulated and most federally regulated workers already have workplace pensions, those that would benefit from the sale of PRPPs began lobbying for Ontario provincial PRPP legislation to copy the federal legislation.

For years, the position of the Ontario Liberal government was that they would not proceed with provincial PRPP legislation, in favour of enhancing the CPP. But, as we can see, something has changed along the way and the government has shifted its priorities, whether they want you to know it or not.

From this historical context, it is clear that the government has shifted directions, but it's not so clear from their rhetoric. The government continues to hold the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, or ORPP, up as the pension policy that they are pointing to and prioritizing, but, as we all know, the government's rhetoric and its actions don't always line up.

Towards the end of the fall session, the government introduced two pieces of legislation related to retirement savings. In fact, they even released them on the same day.

First, Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, is the first of three pieces of legislation that will eventually comprise the ORPP. This bill is little more than a framework, mostly reiterating information that was already established during last year's budget, and provides little new or substantial policy.

Second, Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, is a fully fleshed-out piece of legislation that will allow PRPPs to hit the ground running once the bill receives royal assent.

Speaker, it is almost too transparent. This government has gotten a lot of mileage off of their claims of being progressive, but the only thing they did to put the ORPP

ahead of the PRPP was list it one position higher on the order paper. I can only imagine the strategic discussion that went on in the caucus room about making sure the ORPP was Bill 56 instead of Bill 57.

If this government were truly committed to public pensions, then that is where they would have focused their energy. PRPPs would have been an afterthought instead of the secret prize in this government's pension shell game. We've seen it far too often: The government tries to hide its true intentions on both sides, and the policy suffers as a result. In order to appease their friends on Bay Street, the government knew that they had to give PRPPs a head start on the ORPP, but to avoid compromising their progressive image, they made sure to pass something ORPP-related on the same day.

Fortunately, in our parliamentary system, our job on this side of the aisle is to hold the government to account, and we plan to do just that. We've all seen enough Liberal spin to make ourselves dizzy, but when their actions are this obvious, it makes our job a little bit easier.

Now that we've covered some of the historical context, Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to the question of whether PRPPs really fill an existing gap, like the government claims they do.

Over the past six months, the government has spoken at length about the importance of voluntary options. But this does not take into account the fact that a multitude of voluntary options already exist. Whether it be RRSPs, TFSAs, ETFs or any other financial acronym you can think of, PRPPs are not so much filling an existing gap as piling into an already crowded space.

0940

To illustrate this point, I would like to read from an interesting article I came across on this very topic. The article is by Greg Hurst, a Vancouver-based pension consultant with Greg Hurst and Associates Ltd., and it is titled, "Does Anyone Need a PRPP?" It begins with a quote from Dr. Seuss's *Sleep Book*:

At the fork of a road

In the Vale of Va-Vode

Five foot-weary salesmen have laid down their load.

All day they've raced round in the heat, at top speeds,

Unsuccessfully trying to sell Zizzer-Zoof Seeds

Which nobody wants, because nobody needs.

The article goes on to explain the significance of this passage as follows:

"Both small business and insurance industry leaders exhorted the pooled registered pension plan (PRPP) as a preferable option over the ORPP. But PRPPs may be akin to Dr. Seuss's Zizzer-Zoof Seeds, at least outside of Quebec.

"Only the federal government has fully implemented a PRPP regulatory framework. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia have all tabled or passed PRPP legislation, but regulations have yet to be completed. Under all of these jurisdictions, PRPPs would be voluntarily offered by employers and employees would be able to opt out of participation.

"Quebec has implemented the Voluntary Retirement Savings Plan (VRSP), which is similar to the PRPP, except that it will be mandatory for employers with more than five employees and without a registered pension plan or payroll contributions to either an RRSP or TFSA to implement a VRSP with automatic enrolment of employees. Employee contributions will ultimately be at the rate of 4% of salary, however, employees may opt out. Employer VRSP contributions will be optional."

He continues: "Outside of Quebec's mandatory VRSP version, does anybody need a PRPP? Does anybody want a PRPP? Or is the PRPP like Zizzer-Zoof seeds, 'which nobody wants, because nobody needs.'

"The early bloom on the PRPP rose bush was that employers could provide a retirement program while at the same time avoiding fiduciary responsibility. This bloom soon withered as most commentators observed that employers would still have responsibility for selecting and monitoring a PRPP provider (which activities may have fiduciary characteristics), and this doesn't seem much different from existing responsibilities relating to group RRSPs or DC plans."

The article finishes by summarizing quite neatly, "As long as DC pension plans, deferred profit-sharing plans and RRSPs are available, and there is no mandatory requirement for an employer to implement a pension plan, nobody needs a PRPP. I suspect nobody will want them either."

So there is little to support the government's claim that PRPPs will fill a gap in the retirement security system, and we are left to question their true motives for bringing this bill forward.

We agree that Ontario has a retirement savings crisis, but the answer is not yet another private sector savings vehicle. To illustrate this point, allow me to share some of the numbers on RRSPs in Canada: \$683.6 billion—that's the total unused RRSP contribution room as of 2011; 24%—that is the percentage of eligible tax filers who contributed to an RRSP in 2011; 22.7 million—that was the number of Canadians with RRSP contribution room in 2011. As you can see, the RRSP system is not stretched in our country.

In 2012 in my riding of Oshawa, 95% of those aged 65 or older received income from CPP, but only 9.4% received income from an RRSP. Canadians now contribute about \$40 billion annually to their RRSPs, but that still leaves an estimated \$80 billion in RRSP tax deferral room that has not been taken up.

RRSPs play an important role in our retirement savings, but the vast majority of Canadians continue to have ample room available for additional savings; yet the government continues to tell us that PRPPs are a needed addition. The more you really look at PRPPs, the more they look like those Zizzer-Zoof Seeds, which nobody wants and nobody needs.

Let's take a look at what is actually in this bill. Bill 57 would, if passed, permit the establishment of and provide for the administration of PRPPs in Ontario by largely adopting the federal legislation that came into force in

2012. Bill 57 would also extend regulatory authority over PRPPs to the Ontario Superintendent of Financial Services—the superintendent—and sets out a process for a PRPP administrator to object or appeal decisions of the superintendent. Finally, Bill 57 would amend other legislation, including the Pension Benefits Act—PBA—to add PRPPs to the definition of a pension plan and add PRPPs to the list of vehicles to which a plan can permit a former member or eligible spouse to transfer pension plan assets. As you can see, it's quite a bit more substantive than the legislation we so recently discussed on the ORPP, but I guess that comes as no surprise at this point.

It is not so much the provisions of this bill that we oppose as it is the impact that PRPPs will have in general and whether their presence is the necessary addition that the government claims.

I briefly touched on our concerns with the increased fees associated with private plans earlier on but I would like to elaborate further. The single biggest problem with private sector retirement savings options such as the PRPPs is the private sector management fees. Canadians pay 2% or more for administration of their RRSPs, whereas the large public pension funds, such as CPP and OMERS, pay well less than 1% for fund administration. High fees erode returns.

PRPPs are supposed to be very large funds designed to keep fees low, but the legislation leaves the setting of acceptable fees to regulation. The CPP Investment Board, like the large provincial public sector workplace pension plans, has managed to keep administration costs very low. This makes them a better sponsor than the insurance industry and banks for a retirement savings vehicle. As I stated earlier, across a lifetime, the difference is immense and we don't want to see Ontarians losing half of their retirement savings to bank and insurance fees.

Let's take this opportunity to compare a defined benefit Ontario-wide plan with a PRPP investment plan. Pensions are locked in. PRPPs are also locked in. However, with pensions, plan members put money into the plan; employers put money into the plan. The money is amassed in a huge pool that is locked in and individuals can't take it out before retirement. Because the employers match and contribute to the plan, money is doubled as it is saved, and this huge pool can grow tremendously through investments and effective plan management. The original investment accounts for a fraction of what it will be worth after years of investment growth.

PRPPs do not require obligatory contributions by employers so the money put into the pool is half that of a regular pension plan. There is less in the pot to invest and therefore there is less growth. The 50% rule guiding pensions means that employee contributions, with interest, can pay for half of the value of pensions. The contributions have to come from both the employee and the employer. That is the basic concept of a pension. However, with this PRPP legislation, this government is opening up the market to plans that are pretending to be pensions but that are exempt from the 50% rule. They are

saying that these wannabe pensions are employee problems.

PRPPs are interesting in that the banking and insurance industry will essentially be cannibalizing their own market. RRSPs will likely disappear; they won't be able to compete. PRPPs offer the benefit of a pooled investment and they can be offered across many employers and across the province but they can't yield the predictable benefit of a defined benefit plan because they are vulnerable to the market. There are no guarantees upon retirement that the market will be favourable to retirees. PRPPs neither oblige employers to contribute nor do they guarantee a definite benefit upon retirement. They do, however, offer a choice, but to companies. This government talks about options and choice, so let's do that too. PRPPs, as we said, are locked-in investments. Once employees have money locked into these plans, it is there until retirement—well, the money that isn't taken out for fees is there for retirement, but that's a separate point.

0950

The choice the government talks about has, interestingly, not been about choice for plan members. It isn't choice for employees. It isn't choice for Ontarians. It is choice for companies and employers. Companies may choose to have these pooled piggy bank products for their employees or not. Companies may choose which one from which insurance firm they want to have. Here's the choice point, though: If a company decides to have a PRPP—which they don't have to pay into, remember—all of their employees are enrolled; they have no choice. If they work there and their company decides that this is the savings vehicle for them, then they, as automatically enrolled plan members, have no choice but to save in this vehicle.

Let me say it another way. You work at a company. Your company gives you a shiny new piggy bank with "PRPP" written in fancy script on the side. That's their gift to you: a place to put your money. But they won't be putting any money into it, and you can't crack it open until you retire. And it will cost you fees to keep it. When you retire, they hand it back to you and now it's your responsibility. You can buy an annuity, perhaps—a product sold to you by an insurance company—but you'll never really know how much per month goes to decumulation fees; you'll just know how much you're getting every month.

With a defined benefit pension plan, you put money into the piggy bank and so does your employer. They match what you put in. You double your money right off the bat. While you work, it grows, and when you retire, you don't have to figure out what to do with the piggy bank. You get a definite amount, a defined benefit, every month. No matter what the market does, you have a predictable, stable, dependable income stream and you aren't paying hidden monthly fees. The money in the piggy bank continues to be managed, and you continue to participate in your economy into your retirement.

Let's also consider the basic reason for pensions versus pooled profit plans. Pensions are for protection.

People want protected and predictable income into their retirement. PRPPs, however, are intended to offer a savings service to customers and a profit to the plan managers—protection versus profit. PRPPs are not like pensions because there is no defined benefit, no obligation for the employer to contribute, the fee structure is unregulated, and it is voluntary for the employer to even opt into. If the employer opts in, then all employees are automatically put in and they can't opt out. Like a pension plan, the money is tied up until retirement. Like any DC plan, the benefit isn't guaranteed. If the market does badly, so does your investment. Unfortunately, there goes your predictability into retirement.

Banks and insurance companies are a part of our financial fabric, granted. But they have a finger in every pie during every life phase. Pensions should be about security and protection, not fees and profit. We are offended that this government is succumbing to the pressure of their Bay Street friends and rolling out this piece of legislation before their own pension plan.

Speaking of their own pension plan, I have been appreciating the opportunity to hear from Ontarians on the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, ORPP, in committee. During committee hearings, we have heard from those who want a made-in-Ontario plan and those who do not. There are many intelligent people from across our province representing different industries and different perspectives. While standing here as a progressive New Democrat, I can't say I agree with some of the viewpoints, but I respect them and I've learned a lot from them. It would seem that across the province, the best option for improving the savings picture is an enhancement of the CPP, full stop.

As I said before and I will say again, I'm looking forward to a change in federal leadership when Tom Mulcair becomes our Prime Minister. When he does, we can digress forward to his support of an expanded CPP. But I digress.

We should focus on the challenge before us. The Ontario Liberals tabled two bills on the same day: one setting out a framework for an Ontario pension plan, Bill 56, and one allowing the sale of pooled profit plans, Bill 57.

During the Bill 56 hearings, we are hearing various themes and concerns. Some of the themes are that more people should benefit. A benefit plan like the CPP should benefit everyone in society. This government, however, before working out any details, has put into Bill 56 that some plans should be exempted and not included, that some plans should be considered comparable and, therefore, their plan members would not be able to participate in the ORPP.

While I wholeheartedly agree that more people should be able to participate and retire with a defined benefit and defined level of security, I did think it was fascinating that there were unexpected supporters of the same idea that plans shouldn't be exempt, but for different reasons. If some plans are exempt and others aren't, we will see an uneven playing field from a business and competition

perspective. Exempting some plans and not others will create disparity, disadvantage and, really, an administrative and financial nightmare for whoever manages this Ontario-wide plan. It really ought to be modelled after the CPP and include everyone.

But let's look again at this notion of "comparable" and what might be considered comparable for the sake of exemption. As I have tried to explain clearly, PRPPs are not pensions. They might pretend to be. In fact, they call themselves pensions, but they are not, nor should they be.

We have been hearing strong, reasoned arguments for various defined contribution plans and various established investment plans, and for them to be considered comparable. I maintain, however, that none should be exempt. But that isn't up to me to decide. The government will have to ultimately commit to leaving people out or bringing people in.

When it comes to PRPPs, though, nothing about them makes them comparable to pension plans. The first concern we had about PRPPs was whether they would be considered comparable to and subsequently exempt from the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. I asked the question more than a few times during question period, but both the Minister of Finance and the associate minister responsible for the ORPP were not willing to give a concrete answer.

So after the third try I submitted my question on the order paper and anxiously awaited the government's response. To my colleagues with a little more experience than myself: This was a learning experience. I learned that the government has a fairly lengthy period of time to respond to order paper questions and, more importantly, I learned that the government makes use of that time in its entirety.

So after submitting my question in November, I finally received my answer in late February, two days before the answer was due. With that much time to prepare, I expected that the answer I would receive would be definitive and comprehensive. I would like to read that answer to you here today, and I will let you all judge whether you feel that these adjectives accurately reflect the response that I received.

First, I will start with my question, Mr. Speaker.

"Enquiry of the ministry: Will the Associate Minister of Finance responsible for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan clarify whether PRPPs will be considered comparable and will employees of employers enrolled in PRPPs be exempted from the automatic enrolment provisions of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan." Pretty straightforward, I thought.

Their response, which I would like to read into the record:

"On December 8, 2014, Ontario introduced the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014, that would, if passed, create a framework for the establishment of the ORPP and commit the government to establishing the plan by January 1, 2017.

"On December 17, 2014, the government released a discussion paper that set out its preferred approach on

key design features of the ORPP, including the definition of a comparable plan.

"As stated in the discussion paper, the preferred approach is to define comparable plans as defined benefit (DB) and target benefit (TB) multi-employer pension plans (MEPPs) as these plans closely align with the key features of the ORPP and the CPP.

"The government recognizes that voluntary savings mechanisms like PRPPs will also play an important role in strengthening the retirement income system. As the minister has previously stated, our current view is that these vehicles are complementary and will not be considered comparable.

"The government is currently reviewing submissions from the consultation process. Final decisions on this and other key design features will be outlined in the future."

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So just to revisit, it "is currently reviewing submissions," "Final decisions on this and other key design features will be outlined in the future," and "Our current view is that these vehicles are complementary and will not be considered comparable."

We don't just want their current view; we want commitment. We know the government brought this bill forward to appease their friends on Bay Street. We know it is being given a head start of at least a few years and that insurance companies will have just enough time to entice employers with no-contribution piggy banks for their employees, whose personal contributions will grow a huge profitable product that will benefit industry, rather than dignity in retirement.

As you can see, the government, as usual, has been rather careful with their language. In more ways than I can count, they leave their position open-ended and quite pliable. That is not to say that we expect the government to have all of the details of the ORPP set and ready at this moment. But this is not a logistical question. This is a question of intentions. It is a question of priorities. It is a question of whether the government is more concerned with making the plan as strong as possible or making their friends on Bay Street happy.

If this government wanted to give pension security a real chance, they would have waited to introduce these profit plans. I guess it comes down to priorities. It is disappointing that, time and time again, we see this government cater to their rich and powerful partners rather than real, hard-working, often struggling neighbours, families and constituents. It should be individuals who benefit financially, not only the financial industry that benefits. We will continue to hold the government to account so that these sorts of concessions are not made and so that Ontarians receive the most progressive plan possible going forward.

As my time winds down, I would like to return to the CPP once more. As Ontarians, we don't want our communities to suffer. I don't believe we want our neighbours to struggle. We don't want our businesses to go under. We don't want our young people to feel hopeless. We don't want our seniors hungry, and we don't want

them destitute. We want people employed. We want people to be secure and comfortable in their golden years. At the end of the day, all Ontarians, all Canadians and all people deserve the right to retire with dignity. Too often, we are told that pension plans are a luxury or that they are a thing of the past. But retirement security is not a luxury; it is a necessity. The Canada Pension Plan continues to prove that collective retirement security can be delivered in an efficient, effective and reliable manner.

To this end, I would like to share a comment that was shared with me by one of my constituents on Facebook. "I am disabled, on a disability pension from a local employer who paid me very little money and who nickels and dimes me for every bit of disability pension I received. Retire? I want to survive. Retirement in any kind of comfort (basic needs) is a dream I can't afford!"

Speaker, life doesn't stop at retirement. The CPP was created on the principle that it is beneficial to all of us when our friends and neighbours aren't struggling and can continue to contribute to the economy after they retire. Unfortunately though, as the world has changed around us, the benefit provided by the CPP has become insufficient. The maximum yearly benefit is \$12,500, and the average senior ends up receiving less than \$7,000 per year from the Canada Pension Plan.

It remains our steadfast belief, as the government maintains as well, that the ideal way to solve the retirement security crisis is through an enhancement of the CPP. It is the simplest solution for the greatest number of people, and it would permit a number of efficiencies and securities that can only be provided on a national scale.

It is too bad that our Prime Minister does not see it the same way. Like too many in this room, Prime Minister Harper also believes that our retirement security crisis can be solved with voluntary savings options that fill the pockets of bankers and insurance brokers who collect hefty fees at every turn. Speaker, we support voluntary savings options. We just want to make sure that they're not the government's priority.

So, as you can see, there are major issues associated with PRPPs and this piece of legislation. There are no employer obligations to contribute to PRPPs. Workers are pretty much on their own in terms of contributions. There is no defined or even target benefit with PRPPs. Workers end up with whatever the market returns are on their cumulative contributions when they retire.

There are questions too. Will the banks and insurance firms who administer PRPPs be permitted to invest the funds in all those investment products that they sell themselves?

The NDP supports the idea of public pensions. That's why we proposed one for Ontario in 2010. The NDP supports progressive public pensions, progressive public programs. We don't, however—and never will—support Harper-style pooled retirement pension plans. It is concerning that the government so clearly prioritized bank products and Bay Street over pensions and the financial security of workers in this province. I was under the impression that, as members of provincial Parliament,

we work for the people of Ontario and not for private financial institutions. PRPPs are financial products.

The government is selling the idea of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan to Ontarians. The comforting and progressive language we're all hearing from the government speaks to the need for stability and the ability to live with dignity into retirement. However, the marketing of the PRPP legislation is that the government is giving Ontarians voluntary options. Remember, these voluntary options are products, and they are only voluntary for the employers. They are favours for banks and investment companies—who, incidentally, will be thrilled when Ontarians start putting their money into bank coffers. I'm not saying they are not investments, but losing massive amounts due to fees over the life of the investment is not the kind of retirement security that Ontarians should be banking on.

If this government is truly committed to the idea of helping Ontarians plan for and afford their futures, if they truly believe in retirement security and stability, then they should have led with public pensions and not with Harper-style pooled registered pension plans, which commit money and benefit to corporations and banks. Speaker, I've said it before many times in this House: Banks and insurance companies are not planning on retiring any time soon, but workers are retiring every day, and we want to ensure that when they do retire, they are able to do so with dignity.

If our job as members of provincial Parliament is to represent the interests of Ontarians, then the government is not doing their job with this bill, and that's why I can't support it. As New Democrats, we have always believed and will always believe that all Ontarians should have access to a strong defined benefit pension plan, and for those that don't have one, it is our duty as representatives of this province to provide it.

We implore this government to design and implement a progressive public pension plan for hard-working people across Ontario who deserve one, to stop focusing on exceptions and exemptions, and to start focusing on helping more Ontarians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will share my time with my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock for a moment, please.

I will recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo in just a moment. Just to remind you that we will be recessing at 10:15 and that you will be allowed to continue your debate at another appropriate time.

I now recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to talking to you for about seven minutes. Thanks for the heads-up.

I just want to commend the member from Oshawa for clearly outlining some of our concerns as they relate to Bill 57. I think she accurately tied into the tension between Bill 56 and how it was a priority and yet we are

primarily debating Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

I'm just going to pivot quickly to the CPP conversation that's happening in this country. You may be interested to know that, according to a very recent study done and published by the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, HOOPP, entitled Retirement Income Crisis: Inevitable or Avoidable?, "78% of Ontarians support increasing CPP contributions and benefits by 60%." They ask this question: "Does a solution involve dismantling existing DB plans? Not according to the majority of Ontarians (65%) who don't think it's unfair that some workers have better pension plans than others. Most do want the system fixed for everyone, though. A majority (57%) believe the government has not done enough to regulate corporate pension plans to ensure that they are stable." So there is this concern out in the broader public around corporate pension plans.

"For 61% of Ontarians, the solution lies in modelling private sector benefit plans after public sector DB plans," so people will publicly recognize that a defined benefit plan—they see the plus side. Bill 57 does not reflect the concerns of the people of this province. It just simply doesn't.

1010

The member from Oshawa also raised the issue of management fees. When we met with HOOPP, as I said, they raised the issue of where pension plans are going in this country and in this province. They said that if a DC plan is looking at perhaps a 5% growth rate, most people would say, "Okay, that 5%, that's pretty good." But if you factor in the 3% management fees and the 2% rate of inflation, you've basically made no progress whatsoever. You do the math. Our concern, obviously, around Bill 57 is more than ideology. It's really about the numbers and who benefits from this particular piece of legislation.

While all parties in this Legislature agree about the importance of retirement security for Ontarians, we know there is obviously disagreement about how this should be achieved, so I'm happy to be participating in this debate. As the finance critic, I can argue for a full hour about the economic benefit to this country, this province and local communities around a very well-run defined benefit pension plan because the research is there. When you look at the rates of return and who benefits, the numbers are very clearly apparent to us. We question why the government would be bringing forward Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, as a priority versus the very-much-talked-about ORPP.

Defined benefit plans obviously create a very positive environment in the local economy. Public sector defined benefit plans in Canada manage almost \$900 billion. Actually, HOOPP told us it's close to a trillion dollars. They have a lot of experience in this regard. And 35% of this is invested in alternative classes—private equity, real estate. They're extremely well-managed funds with low expense ratios, low liquidity requirements, and you may be interested to know that they employ about 10,000 professionals in total.

There is this tension between these two bills that I think is more than about ideology. It's about who is profiting and what is the best option for this province to engage in from an economic perspective, and in the absence, obviously, as the member from Oshawa pointed out, of leadership at the national level on the part of Mr. Harper, who has refused to recognize the need to improve the CPP.

Of course, we've also heard about this from the Liberal government, who used to tell Ontarians that they needed a partner in Ottawa to enhance the CPP. Now we've heard a great deal about a made-in-Ontario option, the ORPP, and yet here we are in a debate about Bill 57, which adopts the federal pooled registered pension plan legislation that came into place back in 2012. So the provincial government is now following the federal government's lead, which, I hope we can all agree, is a little ironic.

Why are we debating the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act today, before the Liberals made their promised plan? This raises questions about this government's priorities. We've actually been very consistent in challenging this government about their priorities. This even goes right back to the Auditor General's report on where the money is going. If you look at Infrastructure Ontario, for instance, and you look at the transfer of risk and the cost of doing public-private partnerships at a cost of \$8 billion, with \$6.5 billion of that going towards financing and consulting fees, that's not in the best interests of the people of this province.

We have the same questions around principles, that this government moves forward with a piece of legislation like this, because I think it speaks to the priorities. The member from Oshawa is very right on this. The management fees compromise the benefit to pensioners going forward.

I think my time is up. I look forward to continuing this debate tomorrow afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and yes, you will have a further opportunity to continue debate at a time yet to be determined.

It is now 10:15. This Legislature stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have two introductions that I want to make. I'll make them at the same time.

I want to welcome Dylan Attack and his father, Ritch Attack, here. Dylan is, apart from Steve Paikin, I think, the number one Ticats fan ever.

Interjection: Oskee Wee Wee.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Oskee Wee Wee.

I'd like to also introduce Farrah Khan of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and Sly Castaldi of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, who will be co-chairing our permanent Roundtable on Violence against Women as part of our Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment. They'll be chairing their first meeting this afternoon. We're very excited. Thank you very much for being here.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome to the House a Mustang and a Viking. Participating in the teachers' forum we have Kelly Payne from F.E. Madill and Ray Lewis from Goderich District Collegiate Institute. Welcome to the House.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Harold and Marjorie Fast, who are the grandparents of page captain Joe Fast. They are here this morning in the east gallery. They're here from Spiritwood, Saskatchewan.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'd like to welcome, from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, someone who is participating in the teachers' forum as well and has been here since Sunday: Jody Shaddick. Thank you for coming. Welcome.

Hon. Mario Sergio: From York University, I have Jianhong Wu, an expert in evaluating matters. Also, from James Cardinal McGuigan Catholic High School, I have teacher Joseph Pulcini and grade 10 students. I'd like to welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to introduce three guests today: first of all, Peter Tomaszewski, who is the father of our page Connor Tomaszewski; also, Diane Ballantyne, who's here attending the teachers' forum; and Rory Narine from Cogeco cable TV. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I, too, have two introductions to make. I would like to first of all welcome Marilyn Duarte, a teacher from my riding participating in the third Legislative Assembly teachers' forum. Welcome.

I would also like to give a big welcome to the members of the MPAC board and executive management committee. They are here. They're having a reception later on this afternoon for all the members from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the legislative dining room. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I have two introductions. I am delighted to introduce you to a lovely family from my region: Janek Jagiellowicz; his wife, Dorothy McCabe; and their two daughters Zoe and Tessa.

Also visiting us from Kitchener Centre is Jean Knowlton. Her niece Alycia Berg is one of our page captains today. Welcome.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, it's my great pleasure to introduce the grade 10 civics class from St. Joseph's Morrow Park school in Willowdale. They are sitting up in the east lobby with their principal, Patricia Coburn, and their civics instructor. I hope that we have a very responsible and demonstrative day today.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: From Cambridge, our page captain today, Alycia Berg, has several family members

in the east gallery. We have her father, David Berg; her brother Aaron Berg; her grandparents Barbara and Lloyd Berg; her aunt Jean Knowlton; and her other set of grandparents, Donna and Howard Famme, are also joining us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, it gives me great privilege to introduce Kayla Palmateer, one of the teachers. Thank you for hosting the forum, Speaker.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A great surprise. I just looked in the members' gallery and noticed a very good friend of mine, Greg MacEachern, here at Queen's Park. Greg is a good friend, a supporter, and he also lives in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. It is an honour to work for him every single day. Welcome to Queen's Park, Greg.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's a pleasure for me to rise in this House and welcome Sarah Parry, a teacher from Port Perry, in the riding of Durham.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Our page captain Alycia Berg is getting a lot of notoriety around here today, but I'd just like to mention that Donna and Howard Famme over here, her grandparents, are from my riding of Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member from Oakville and page Marin Papulka, I'd like to introduce his mother, Megan Sweeting, and his father, Thomas Papulka, who will be in the members' gallery this morning.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: A point of order, Speaker. I'd like to correct my record. Yesterday afternoon, in debate on Bill 45, there were a number of members who talked about maple syrup producers. I used the words "standard testing," and what I should have said is that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs hasn't harmonized Ontario's maple syrup grading standards with the federal government's amendments to the maple products regulations of the Canadian Agricultural Products Act.

Further, Speaker, I made a second error. I want to correct my record in regard to MPAC. I used the words "try to label" a farm as commercial. I wanted to correct my record; what MPAC was trying to do with my producer was to change their assessment to commercial because they were selling pancakes two weeks out of 52 weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask all members to heed that part of that was a correcting of the record and part of that was a continuation of debate, which is not allowed. In the future, I will be very insistent on simply correcting your record.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can be even more clear.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery 25 teachers from across the province participating in the third annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario teachers' forum. We thank them for being here to learn about what happens here at Queen's Park. Thank you all.

Last call for introduction of guests.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to introduce a good friend of mine who is in the members' east gallery today, one Mary Smith, who is the mayor of the municipality of Selwyn, in the great riding of Peterborough. She's here in her role of being an MPAC board member. Welcome, Mary.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in the most recent report from the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Essensa called for the strengthening of third-party advertising rules, and we expect that his upcoming annual report will do the same.

Premier, campaign finance rules are there to help create somewhat of a level playing field and to limit the degree to which money can be used to influence the outcome of an election. As long as third parties such as the Working Families coalition are exempt from the same rules as other political entities, as the Toronto Star has put it, "fairness is distorted."

Premier, will you agree to the Chief Electoral Officer's request and introduce legislation to limit third-party spending?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the interim Leader of the Opposition knows, we've taken a number of measures to make elections and election finances more accountable. We're always open—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Look—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The question was put without interruption, and so shall the answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That includes anyone on that side.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're always open to ways to improve Ontario's democratic process, Mr. Speaker. We always have been and always will be. We have rules in place in Ontario to ensure that there is both transparency and free speech in our election campaigns. Obviously, that's the balance we have to strike, but we have those rules in place.

1040

Third-party advertising rules were introduced in Ontario for the first time in 2007. The first time we had any rules around third-party advertising, it was our government that brought them in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, by allowing the negative campaign ads to be paid for by your third-party friends, you allow them to do the dirty work for you, and that's completely unfair. They were allowed to spend \$9 million more than the opposition parties and they did it to attack mainly my party, freeing up your party to spend on positive campaigning. It's unfair and you know it.

During the last election, for example, the largest third-party spender spent a total of \$2.6 million. That far outweighed what the NDP was allowed to spend in the last election.

Premier, do you believe that allowing third-party interest groups to spend more than political parties is healthy for Ontario's democracy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Attorney General is going to want to comment in the supplementary on this, but again, from our perspective, finding that balance is very, very important.

Under the current rules, third parties that spend \$500 or more—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —on election advertising are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. That kind of transparency is important and that is the regime of rules that we put in place.

Again, I would say to the member opposite, he knows that we brought those rules in, he knows that we were the government that put any parameters around third-party advertising. We are always interested in suggestions on how we might improve the democratic process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Premier: The Chief Electoral Officer noted that “Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and the federal government have all adopted controls over third-party advertising,” and “that of the jurisdictions in Canada that regulate third-party advertising, Ontario is the only one where third parties do not face advertising spending or contribution limits.”

To ensure fairness, I will soon be bringing forward a private member's bill that will introduce third-party spending limits. Premier, will you stand behind your word and support my initiative?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Attorney General?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, the reason why the opposition party leader knows this group contributed and how much they did is because of what we have done. We changed the rules, we changed the legislation. We're always open to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds—Grenville. Leader.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, it's because in 2007 this government introduced the third-party advertising rule. Under this current rule, third parties that spend \$500 or more on election advertising are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. Registered third parties must also report to the Chief Electoral Officer on election advertising expenses.

It's because of our change that you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, Paul Compton and his five-year-old son Mateo are constituents of mine. Paul is a Canadian citizen. He grew up, lived and worked in Canada for 32 years before taking a job to teach overseas. Last Friday, Paul was told that Mateo's OHIP eligibility had been pulled by your government.

Mateo was born to Paul and his wife while they lived in Peru, and has fallen through the cracks in our health insurance laws. If Paul were adopting Mateo from a foreign adoption agency, Mateo would be covered. If Paul were a foreign worker in Canada on a work visa, his dependent son would be covered. But instead, Paul is a Canadian citizen whose dependent son was born abroad, so we have declined him health insurance.

Minister, will you intervene to help Paul and his son Mateo?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, I understand that this is a deeply troubling and difficult situation for the family involved. I had an opportunity to speak briefly with the member opposite yesterday after question period, and committed at that time to look into the situation in more detail, which I have done. It is a complicated issue, as the member opposite knows.

We have taken the politics out of decisions such as this, in terms of OHIP eligibility, precisely for this reason. The member understands that the reason for eligibility is due to changes that the federal government, in fact, made with regard to citizenship.

But I have committed to the member opposite to follow up on this. I know he has met with my ministry, or spoken with the ministry. I would offer a similar opportunity to the family involved to meet with my ministry officials.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: This is a grave situation for Paul and his family. Although there are some elements of im-

migration laws, it's because regulation 552 has not been modified by this government since those changes in the immigration laws.

Paul and his family are looking to you to demonstrate that this government has compassion and integrity. You surely will agree that it is not within the spirit of the law to disallow health care coverage to the dependent child of Paul, who is a Canadian citizen. Minister, will you act now and make sure that the law is applied as it was intended and that Mateo is covered by health insurance?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would suggest, and ask the member opposite to join me in the understanding, that this was a federal decision that was taken legislatively several years ago—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, my God. Everything—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would invite the member opposite, in fact, to petition the federal government if in fact—as I take the position if I disagree with those changes that were made.

The fact is that Ontario health coverage is provided to individuals who are Canadian citizens and individuals who are permanent residents. I think that's a fair process. There is a wait period in place for new permanent residents and new Canadian citizens, a wait period of three months, that has been long-established in this province.

Really, this is the result of a federal decision which restricted citizenship for those individuals who were born abroad.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: A follow-up, Minister: We know that when those federal laws changed, your government immediately took steps and provided OHIP coverage for refugees. I have the press release here. You acted. Paul Compton and his family are asking you to act in their case. It is a fair and just request.

Minister, I think it's important for us to realize that there's a lesson here: that laws that are rigid and lack discretion, and that are applied regardless of the circumstances, always result in unjust outcomes.

Minister, I'll take you up on that offer; I'm sure Paul will take you up on that offer. But we have met and I have spoken with you, and I've sent letters to the immigration minister here as well. We have not had any success. It's time to act and change regulation 552.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned at the beginning of my first answer, I sympathize with the family involved. The member opposite knows—I have committed to following up specifically. I know he has spoken with my ministry. I am happy to arrange that meeting between my ministry and the family involved.

But fundamentally, this is something that has resulted from a change in legislation at the federal level, further restricting the ability of Canadian citizens' children born abroad to obtain Canadian citizenship. OHIP coverage is available for Canadian citizens and permanent residents in this province, as you know.

This was a federal decision, and I would implore the member opposite to work with me at the federal level to have action, if he believes this is an injustice.

1050

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is for the Premier. Last week, the energy minister was on CP24 and he said, "The government has decided we will be selling a portion of Hydro One."

Now that the energy minister has told Ontarians about the Premier's plan, can the Premier actually tell Ontarians how much of Hydro One she has decided to sell off?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the leader of the third party knows that we are awaiting a report from Ed Clark and his team. We have committed to a review of the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario, because we believe that investing in modern infrastructure—in transit, in transportation infrastructure, in roads and bridges across the province—is an important part of the economic growth that we know is necessary for this province. The leader of the third party knows that that is the case; she knows that we will be bringing that plan forward once we have those recommendations. I look forward, with her, to hearing those recommendations from Mr. Clark.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Something just doesn't seem to be adding up. The Premier has said no decisions would be made about selling Hydro One until the Ed Clark report goes to cabinet, and on March 10, the energy minister told reporters that no decision had been made about selling Hydro One. But on March 26, the energy minister was on live TV saying, "The government has decided we will be selling a portion of Hydro One."

Now, it sounds like sometime between March 10 and March 26, cabinet got the Clark report and the Liberals made their decision. Otherwise, why would the minister be saying this on live TV?

Has cabinet actually seen the Ed Clark report, Speaker? If they have, will the Premier make that report public today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The final report has not been completed; it has not been received. It will be received shortly. We will be very clear about our intentions going forward, having had an opportunity to look at those recommendations.

But the reality is that there are conversations that are ongoing. I'm not going to pretend that there are not. There are obviously conversations, and it would be irresponsible of us not to have those conversations as those decisions are made.

We await the decisions, we await the recommendations from Mr. Clark's panel, and we will make those public once they are made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what's irresponsible is for the energy minister to say on live TV that the government has already made a decision on selling off Hydro One.

On March 10, the energy minister said any decisions about Hydro One would be "ratepayer-based decisions." He said, "Ratepayers' interests will be looked after."

So if the Premier has decided, as it sounds like she has, to privatize Hydro One, can she offer any proof, any studies, any economic analyses, any regulation—heck, anything at all—that will ensure that ratepayers won't be paying more because of the Premier's short-sighted decision to sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've made very, very clear that in any sale of Hydro One we would retain a significant interest to protect the interests of the ratepayer. But in addition to that, the Ontario Energy Board is an independent regulator with the mandate to protect the interests of Ontario ratepayers. The Ontario Energy Board was there under Conservative administrations, under NDP administrations and under Liberal administrations.

Just by way of example, rate applications are reviewed by the OEB, and they make the final determination. In 2010, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for distribution and received a 9% reduction of their capital request. In 2012, Hydro One asked for a rate increase for transmission and received a 3% reduction for its capital request. When Ontario Power Generation applied for a 6.2% rate increase in 2011, the OEB denied the request and lowered rates by 0.8%. The public is protected—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, if anybody thinks the OEB actually acts in the interests of ratepayers, they've got another think coming.

The question is for the Premier. The Premier loves to say that it is incumbent upon government to do more than one thing at a time, but for some reason the Premier seems to think that Ontarians can either have public hydro or they can have public transit. The Premier doesn't seem to think that Ontarians can have both, like, say, they did for nearly 100 years, when hydro rates were affordable and we actually built subways in this province.

Can the Premier please explain why she is the first Premier in the history of Ontario who thinks public hydro and public transit are an either/or proposition?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that in terms of the ongoing investment in transit and in public transportation across the province and in transportation infrastructure, there has been a huge period of time before 2003 when those investments were not being made. That goes back through governments of all stripes. To the leader of the third party, I would say this: Yes, there was a time in this province when there was

investment in infrastructure, but there was a long period of time when that investment stopped.

We've begun investing again. One of the strategies is to take assets that have been built up over decades, that was infrastructure that was needed many years ago, and recycle those assets, protecting the interests of the people of Ontario, protecting the price base, making sure that the regulatory regime is in place, but also ensuring that we make the investments that we need for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier will recall that there was a subway line being built called the Eglinton line by the NDP government of the day.

In 2013, the Premier insisted that the only way to pay for transit was road tolls. Now she's insisting that the only solution to pay for transit is to sell Hydro One.

New Democrats want to see transit and transportation infrastructure investments across Ontario. But let's look at long-term solutions that put people first, like closing corporate HST giveaways that cost the treasury billions of dollars, or ending the sweetheart deals that have wasted \$8 billion on public-private partnerships, and putting our energies into the affordable public financing that built our highways and transit systems in the first place in this province.

Does the Premier think it's a good solution to sell off Hydro One but keep P3s and HST giveaways?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party is talking about the arrangement that saved the people of Ontario \$6 billion, yes, I think that's a good idea, and making sure that we understand the risks associated with building projects and making sure that we partner with the private sector in a way that's responsible and that gets those projects built.

The challenge with the leader of the third party is that she had and has no plan to—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, I can't hear a thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Actually, the clock was running as I was asking for the one caucus to come to order, but because of your interjection, I stopped the clock. Member from Eglinton–Lawrence, I'd like to do my own job.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party knows that every dollar that's realized from our current asset review will be invested in infrastructure that we need.

The fact is that the leader of the third party had no plan to build infrastructure, she has no plan to build infrastructure, but we do, and we're going to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I trust the Auditor General's numbers far, far more than I would

trust a Liberal number any day of the year. Ending P3s would save money, so says the Auditor General, and build infrastructure, not just once but every year. Closing corporate HST loopholes would build infrastructure, not just once but every year. Taking a look at the fairness of our tax system would build infrastructure, not just once but every single year. Those are clear options with long-term sustainability and fairness.

Can the Premier explain why it is that she thinks the only way to build transit or transportation infrastructure is a short-sighted, one-time asset sale?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that we have a massive infrastructure deficit, across this country actually. This is not just an Ontario issue. This is a conversation that I am having with Premiers across the country. One of the things I have said is that if we had a federal government that was interested in a national infrastructure strategy, we would be having a very different conversation.

1100

If you look at jurisdictions around the world, you will see that where the infrastructure deficits are being addressed and where infrastructure is being built, it is a federal government—it's a national project—that is part of that process. That's not the case here.

We are working within the confines of what we have to work with here in Ontario. One of the things we have done is put in place a financing process that allows us to build. Contrary to what the leader of the third party is saying, a new TD report says: "Reverting entirely back to old models of procurement would represent a major step backwards for the province."

We're not taking that step backwards.

CROWN ATTORNEYS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, John Raftery is once again on the sunshine list for 2014. As you know, John Raftery was given a very large parachute to leave the Peel region, where he worked as an assistant crown attorney. Raftery was paid an astonishing \$368,000 in 2013, almost three times what most crown attorneys are paid. In 2014, he was paid another \$116,000.

In 2012, prosecutors, defence lawyers, court clerks, police officers and a witness filed a group complaint against Raftery. Additional complaints were made in 2011 and 2010. Clearly, there was a history of workplace harassment while he was an assistant crown.

Minister, what is the total amount of the multi-year settlement given to John Raftery to leave the Attorney General's office?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As the member of the opposition party knows, I cannot comment on human resources matters, as all employment matters relating to current or former employees are confidential. I also cannot comment on the earnings of individual employees.

However, I understand that the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act identifies what amounts constitute salary,

and includes, in addition to their annual salary, such forms of remuneration as retroactive salary awards or others.

Public sector salary disclosure is part of the government's commitment to being accountable, open and transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, I know you don't want to talk about John Raftery, but when you give him half a million dollars to walk away, the public has some questions and they need to know.

If this government is serious about workplace harassment, and eliminating it and protecting victims, then you must be prepared to track the number of complaints and investigate those complaints thoroughly.

In the interest of transparency, will you table the number of workplace harassment complaints that were made by public sector employees in 2014?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, like the member knows, I cannot comment on any human resources matters. As well, employment matters relating to current or former employees are confidential, and we'll continue to keep them confidential.

I can tell you that our crown attorneys are held to the highest standard and are expected to conduct themselves professionally and fairly at all times. All crown attorneys in the province of Ontario are subject to the rules of professional conduct of the Law Society of Upper Canada. In addition, they're also subject to crown policies and practices, as well as the same laws that apply to all Ontarians.

There are also procedures in place to deal with complaints against a crown, and when there is a complaint, there is—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. My question is quite simple: Does the Premier think that bribery is acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I don't.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Neither do I.

Does the Premier think that it was acceptable for her Sudbury kingmaker, for her campaign director, to engage in what Elections Ontario calls "bribery" and the OPP says "threatens the appearance of the government's integrity"?

Does the Premier think that this is okay, that this is normal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, let's be absolutely clear. I want the member opposite to be careful. What she's referring to are mere allegations and nothing whatsoever. As you know, there is an investigation into an issue that is ongoing right now. There have been no charges laid by the police in that regard. Even the Chief Electoral Officer in his ruling said that he is not making

any judgment whatsoever. He is letting the independent prosecutors and judges make that determination. So we need to be very careful. These are just allegations. There is a presumption of innocence in our system which all members should respect, and we should let the independent authorities do the investigation and we will co-operate with them fully.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, it's been three weeks since the Premier unveiled the sexual violence and harassment action plan. In my riding of Trinity-Spadina, we received a great deal of positive feedback about that plan. I think it's very powerful to hear the Premier of the largest province talk about rape culture and say that the problem of sexual violence and harassment is rooted in deeply held beliefs about women, men, power and equality. I'm very proud of the leadership of our Premier and the work our government has done.

Minister, can you highlight some of the next steps you'll be taking as part of the action plan?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for this important question. I also want to thank him for his work on the all-party Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. It's great that he's doing that.

Our new permanent round table on sexual violence and harassment is holding its inaugural meeting today, Speaker, so it's a very important and exciting day.

Applause.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes.

The round table is one of the 13 initiatives and actions in our It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment. The advice that we're going to get from the round table is going to help government talk about the issues today as well as the emerging issues on gender-based violence. It will be co-chaired by Sly Castaldi, who is here. She's the executive director of the Guelph-Wellington women's centre. We thank her for taking on that role. The other co-chair is Farrah Khan of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic in Toronto. They're here in the Legislature and I wish them a successful meeting today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you very much, Minister, for that answer. It's encouraging to see all the great work our government is doing to promote a province that's free from sexual violence and harassment.

I'm also heartened to see that our government is working with organizations such as White Ribbon to include men in this very important discussion. As a man and a father of a young boy, I know how important it is for boys to learn the value of respect in a relationship.

I'm also proud that I have taken part in White Ribbon's I'm a Male Model event today at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you update this House on some of the good work being done by organizations such as White Ribbon?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, thank you to the member for the question. Yes, he was with me this morning for the White Ribbon campaign I'm a Male Model. In fact, 24 members of this House from all parties participated in their social media event last week. I want to thank you all for participating, because you are role models and you go a long way to encouraging men to be role models and to help shape the views and attitudes, particularly of young boys, and promote the importance of equal relationships.

In terms of the White Ribbon campaign, which is co-sponsored by COPA, the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions, the target audience includes elementary and secondary teachers, community workers, coaches in schools, fathers and diverse men. White Ribbon, as you know, is a very large campaign in the world and we're very proud of the work that they're doing here in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

The internal finance documents we obtained through the gas plant scandal hearings continue to reveal much about Ontario's finances. Here is your confidential advice to cabinet: "Over the medium term, we have notional targets by sector, that add up to the deficit numbers, but no plans to deliver on them."

1110

In a response to my order paper question this month, the finance ministry revealed they still don't have those line-by-line details for 2017-18. That's the year you claim you can return to balance.

Premier, this is unacceptable. Either you're keeping these numbers from the public because they don't add up, or you simply have no plan to balance. So, Premier, which is it: They don't add up, or you have no plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the President of the Treasury Board is going to want to comment on this in the supplementary. But just to be clear, we have a path to balance. In fact, today the Minister of Finance is going to be talking about the fact that for 2014-15, our government will beat the deficit reduction target that we put in place.

I know the member opposite, for some reason, likes to talk down the Ontario economy, but what he needs to know is that all private sector economists are forecasting continued growth for the Ontario economy. RBC is projecting that Ontario is expected to top provincial economic growth rankings in 2015. RBC forecasts real GDP growth for the province to accelerate from an estimated 2.5% in 2014 to a five-year best rate of 3.3% in 2015, and that's a quote from their document. So we believe there are good days ahead for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: Well, I'm not surprised that the number will come in lower; your own documents I just spoke about told us that you made that number up to begin with.

The troubling news doesn't end there. The ministry response shows you're planning on adding \$1 billion in what it calls "all other tax"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli:—over the next two years. Again, there's no line-by-line; just a promise in writing to wring out \$1 billion in new taxes from Ontario's families and seniors. All the while, your government has made announcements in recent days much like the \$5.6 billion in new spending you announced before last year's budget.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Transportation, second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, you were too busy yelling while I was telling you to come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, are you going on another spending spree the Auditor General just told us we can't afford? If so, what new taxes are you planning on introducing to pay for all this new spending?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question, because it's a question that certainly I'm happy to talk about, given our real focus on overachieving on our fiscal targets.

One of the initiatives that is putting us on the path to balance is the program review renewal and transformation process being led by Treasury Board. We have a commitment to review every program in this province. We are looking at whether or not it is still relevant. Is it effective, is it efficient, and is it sustainable?

So we are going through them, and as we are going through this work, we acknowledge that every dollar counts and that outcomes are what matter to us. Are programs working? If they're not working, what do we need to do to make sure they are getting the outcomes for people? That's an important element of our path to balance.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. People in London and across the province are shaking their heads. They are appalled that the president of Western University made almost \$1 million last year because of a deal that more than doubled his annual salary.

Yesterday, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities avoided my question about whether the government would prohibit double salary payouts and said that Ontarians have the right to make sure their tax dollars are spent properly.

Premier, do you think that almost \$1 million for a university president is spending tax dollars properly at a time when university budgets are being cut, Ontario students are facing the highest tuition in the country, grad students are being paid poverty wages, university class sizes are increasing, and more and more students are being taught by contract faculty?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member for that question. Disclosure of public sector salaries is a part of this government being open, transparent and accountable. As part of that commitment, our government passed legislation last year, the accountability act, which received royal assent last December. This act will allow our government to put control on executive salaries, not only in universities and colleges, but in every public sector and the broader public sector executives. That also includes significant compliance and enforcement measures.

Our government is committed to making sure that the hard caps are in place for executive salaries in the university and college sector, as well as in every sector in the broader public sectors.

When it comes to individual salary disclosure, whatever has been disclosed by the sunshine list, that's what we have. But we cannot enter into discussion about every individual's salary point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I understand that it is common practice in the sector to allow university presidents to take an administrative leave at the end of their term and collect their salary at the same time. But the Western board of governors went one step further: They negotiated a contract allowing the president to forgo an administrative leave and take a double salary instead; in other words, collect two salaries for doing one job. A petition campaign is rapidly gathering steam, calling for a vote of no confidence in the university administration as a result.

Premier, do you support the ability of university boards of governors to negotiate this kind of a deal with a university president? If not, will you step in to prohibit the practice?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. Our universities and colleges, and particularly our universities, are autonomous institutions. They have all the right to run their own daily affairs, including hiring, firing, human resources and all aspects of their own institutions.

Our universities and colleges rank among the best in the world. They have been doing a great job in educating our young people, and we have all confidence in our university board of governors to be able to run our institutions. They're autonomous institutions, and these matters lie within the jurisdictions of our universities and colleges.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Ontario's use of P3s and the alternative financing and procurement model has been under scrutiny recently. I understand that TD Economics released today their special report examining Ontario's AFP model. Their findings differ drastically compared to the rhetoric we hear from the third party. I would like to reiterate what the minister has said many times: that public-private partnerships have had a net benefit of \$6.6 billion over the course of the 74 AFP infrastructure projects. Of Infrastructure Ontario's 37 completed projects, 36 or 97% of these projects were completed on budget.

Will the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please inform the House what TD Economics concluded in its special report?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank TD Economics for commissioning this really important report examining the costs associated with Ontario P3s. The report confirms that our support for the AFP process is well founded. It also confirms that the NDP's rhetoric about AFPs is dead wrong.

Let me quote directly from the report. It reads that "the focus on the \$8 billion in 'excess costs' oversimplified the [auditor's] analysis."

Let me continue to quote: The "narrow focus on the higher tangible costs of P3s does a disservice to an innovative model of government procurement which has enabled a more transparent and accurate accounting of the full costs of a project before construction begins."

Let me go on: "Reverting entirely back to old models of procurement would represent a major step backwards for the province."

The Premier is absolutely right. We're going forward when it comes to building up infrastructure. We're not going to take the advice of the NDP—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for that update.

Our government has a strong track record of building modern infrastructure. Since 2003, our government has invested nearly \$100 billion in infrastructure, focusing on what makes our communities stronger—assets like hospitals, schools and transportation. We are investing over \$130 billion in infrastructure in the next 10 years, which will create over 110,000 jobs each year.

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My constituents and I are encouraged that this government's pragmatic approach to infrastructure is ensuring that we maximize dollars while building the modern infrastructure that Ontario needs to remain a competitive economy.

In fact, I understand that the federal NDP leader, Thomas Mulcair, spoke in favour of the value of P3s.

Would the minister please update the House on what Mr. Mulcair said?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The NDP may not want to listen to us on this issue. By their heckles, they don't seem to want to listen to TD Economics, which I think is a pretty darned credible source, if you ask me.

Maybe they'll consider listening to their federal cousins, because when it comes to the AFP process, Thomas Mulcair said the following—he is not dogmatic: "The point is to get things built."

That's exactly what we're trying to do. We're constantly improving the success of our AFP model. But as Mr. Mulcair puts it, dogmatically rejecting AFP will not help Ontario build the modern infrastructure we need to build for our economy.

We don't want to go back to the days that the NDP want us to go back to. We don't want to see more projects like the Spadina line or Union Station, or BC Place in BC, that went way over budget. We want to stick to our process; 97% of our projects were built—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I have a quote I'd like to read to you: "We will put evidence before ideology and choose partnership over partisanship, and invite everyone to work together...."

Who do you think said that, Premier? Premier, you did. You did, on the opening day of the 41st Parliament. And yet, over three days of committee to consider important safe road legislation, we've seen your government members reject every single amendment proposed by the opposition to make our roads even safer—no debate, just rejection.

Premier, less than nine months later, have you now chosen partisanship over partnership?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member opposite for asking that question. This is the second time over the last number of days that he has given me the opportunity to stand and speak a little bit in this place about Bill 31, the bill that was at committee, that he's referencing, a bill that is known as the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. It's an important bill. It's important that it got through this Legislature into committee. I understand that it will be reported back to this Legislature later today.

It's important because, as I always say, one of my most important responsibilities as minister is to make sure that our roads and highways remain safe. This legislation is designed to accomplish that. For example, this legislation, if passed, will increase distracted driving fines from a range of \$60 to \$500 currently, up to \$300 to \$1,000.

It will allow for the suspension of a driver's licence for those found to be driving under the influence of drugs

or a combination of drugs and alcohol. It will require drivers to keep a one-metre distance from cyclists when passing.

There are a number of very important initiatives in this bill. It's important that it comes back here and gets passed at third reading.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Premier, your Bill 31 committee members were so determined to vote "no" on every idea proposed that they even voted down a section of your own bill impacting impaired driving provisions.

Time and again, we saw thoughtful amendments given short shrift: mandatory distracted driving demerit points; medical-review-of-licence improvements; left-lane, move-over provisions; and the establishment of a highway incident management advisory committee—all proposed, and rejected out of hand.

Premier, it has taken less than nine months for your government to go from preaching partnership to practising arrogance. Premier, your members are following your marching orders. When will you cut the puppet strings and allow government members to embrace the principles of partnership that the July 2014 Premier committed to?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the follow-up question. As I mentioned, this is important legislation. I believe that's why, when this bill was here at second reading, all three parties voted unanimously to make sure that it got sent to committee. I know a great deal of hard work went into the hearings at committee. We heard from the public. There was broad recognition that this bill should get passed as soon as possible.

But it's interesting to me that that member would ask this question, because if I have my information correct, Speaker, when this bill was actually voted on in the final instance at committee yesterday, the members of that party chose to abstain instead of supporting the legislation, and that's unfortunate, Speaker.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. It's hard enough for families in Toronto to find the child care that they need, but the Liberals are making the problem even worse by forcing school closures that will also shut down dozens of child care centres. Today, Toronto city council will hear that more than 2,000 child care spaces are at risk under the Liberals' plan for school closures. Each and every parent struggling to find child care knows that we simply cannot afford to lose 2,000 licensed child care spots in the city of Toronto.

Why doesn't the Premier know that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I obviously haven't seen the report you're referring to, but I think it's actually important to understand that with child care modernization and with the increase in after-school child care, in fact we have dramatically increased the number of child care spaces in

Ontario. In fact, boards will continue to have a requirement, where the parents want it, to have child care in the school available. So it really has nothing to do with whether this school or that school is open. The legislative requirement to provide for before- and after-school child care will continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's shocking that the Minister of Education responsible for child care doesn't know about this extremely important report that's going to city council today. We hear today that the city might seek restitution for the loss of child care centres. But make no mistake, it's young families in this province who are going to be paying the highest price under the Liberals' plan for school closures.

Take the kids who love the West End Parents' Day-care in Old Orchard school, one of the schools in Toronto that the Premier could sell off. Parents shouldn't be forced to fight this Liberal government to save their day-care. They should have a government that expands access to affordable child care, not one that tries to shut child care centres down.

Why is the Premier creating chaos for thousands of families whose beloved child care centres are at risk because of this Liberal government's decisions?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Who knew, Speaker? Apparently the leader of the third party is on the Toronto distribution list; unfortunately, the Minister of Education isn't.

But I repeat: The point here is that there is a legislative requirement through the Education Act already, and now with Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act, for school boards to provide before- and after-school child care in schools where parents ask for it. I'm sure—

Interjections.

Interjection: Why don't you just listen?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —that legislated requirement will continue, so if the parents who are in one place are moving to another place and still want child care, the legislated requirement to provide child care will follow the parent and the child.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Today marks the start of the Ontario Bike Summit, hosted by the Share the Road Cycling Coalition. This event brings together cycling stakeholders from across our province, including municipal and provincial leaders such as our all-party cycling caucus, of which I'm a member. Planners, engineers, advocates—all are gathering this evening for the kickoff dinner where five new bicycle-friendly communities will be announced, bringing the total to 26. In fact, 60% of Ontarians now live in a designated bicycle-friendly community, Speaker.

Cycling is on the move, and as the founder of Share the Road, I had the distinct pleasure of working with the MTO on a number of cycling-related initiatives. One of

the most important, #CycleON, or Ontario's Cycling Strategy, is the main focus of this year's summit. Over the next two days, Ontario's cycling community will join together to discuss #CycleON's implementation and how, working together, we can all make our communities and our province more bicycle-friendly.

Can the minister please update the House on the progress that has been made on the #CycleON strategy?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the member from Burlington, not only for today's question but for her long-standing advocacy on this particular issue. She has done an exemplary job, and she continues to do so here in this Legislature.

Every spring, summer and fall, more than 2.8 million adult Ontarians cycle on a regular basis. That's why our government developed #CycleON, Ontario's Cycling Strategy. This strategy includes a 20-year vision to encourage the growth of cycling and to improve safety for cyclists across the province.

Almost one year ago we released the first of a series of multi-year action plans for implementing our cycling strategy. We also introduced the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program, which will invest \$10 million in municipal cycling infrastructure and \$15 million in provincial cycling infrastructure.

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I am very pleased that my parliamentary assistant, the member from Cambridge, is attending the bike summit to partake in some of the discussions regarding our strategy. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the cycling community on this project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the minister for his response, his leadership and his commitment to road and cyclists' safety, and in particular to Bill 31. I know our government is fond of saying that road safety is our number one priority, but it's extremely important that we consider the safety of everyone using our roads.

Keeping our roads safe requires the co-operation and participation of all road users: drivers, pedestrians and cyclists as well. I know that an important component of the #CycleON strategy is improving cycling safety. I also know that cyclist safety will be an important topic of the discussion at today's bike summit.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide members of this House with more information on what our government is doing to make Ontario roads safer for all road users, and in particular cyclists?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I want to thank the member for that thoughtful question. Last fall I was very proud to introduce Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act. As part of this bill we have proposed a number of legislative and regulatory amendments to improve cycling safety in Ontario, including requiring drivers of motor vehicles to maintain a minimum distance of one metre when passing cyclists, permitting cyclists to ride on paved shoulders of all unrestricted highways, and increasing the fine for persons who improperly open or leave open the doors of motor vehicles.

Though, unfortunately, the official opposition chose to abstain yesterday, I am very pleased to announce that Bill 31 passed through committee with the support of the third party. If passed, this legislation will help ensure that cyclists remain safe on our roads for years to come.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, the 2010 sunshine list included nine people at the Housing Services Corp.—nine people making over \$1 million combined. That was in 2010. We know that the CEO of the Housing Services Corp. earned almost \$300,000 last year.

Minister, can you explain why no one from the Housing Services Corp. appeared on the sunshine list that was released last week?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: They must be, for some reason, exempt from appearing on the list. That's all I can offer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, you claim that your government has made this rogue agency more accountable but, in fact, it was your government that changed the legislation that took them off the sunshine list. My private member's bill would increase accountability by once again requiring housing service corporations to report salaries of over \$100,000. These are public social housing dollars, and taxpayers deserve to know how they're being spent, Minister.

If your changes to the HSC made it more accountable and transparent, as you claim, can you tell us how many people at the Housing Services Corp. earned over \$100,000 last year?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The Housing Services Corp.—which was established by the party opposite, when they were in power, as an independent private corporation—operates as an independent private corporation. We've enhanced the accountability by having them agree to live with Management Board of Cabinet expense limits, making some changes to the board, and bringing in a third-party independent review agency.

As for the sunshine list and whether they and other independent private corporations all across the province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order. You asked the question.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —should be added to the sunshine list is something we'll determine when we debate the honourable member's private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I'm not going to debate you either.

Next question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. On March 31, temporary foreign workers in On-

tario will go to bed as lawfully employed, hard-working, taxpaying residents of Canada and will wake up the next day as illegal immigrants.

What conversations has the province had with the federal government about this new legislation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The world of work is changing in the province of Ontario. Obviously we try to maintain a good relationship with those people who are governing our rules at the federal level as well. We understand that the world of work in the province of Ontario is changing.

Precarious work is more of an issue that the Ministry of Labour needs to deal with on an ongoing basis. We've got the workers' centre report that came out today on precarious work outlining some of the situations that take place here in the province of Ontario. Certainly I meet with my counterparts, with the other Ministers of Labour throughout this country, and certainly I meet with the federal minister. We correspond on a regular basis.

We are keeping abreast of the issue. We certainly take the issue seriously. It's something that we plan to address as a part of the Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act review that's taking place in the province of Ontario as I speak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: To the Premier once again: Thousands of Ontario workers are being left in the lurch. Will this government co-operate with Stephen Harper? Will the OPP, MTO and corrections Ontario be helping to execute the biggest deportation in Canadian history, or does this government have a plan to protect these vulnerable workers and their families that will help them to have a future in Ontario?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think the question was: "Would we co-operate with Stephen Harper?" The answer is that we'll co-operate with the federal government when it's in the best interest of Ontario and when it's in the best interest of employees who work in the province of Ontario.

The member will know—and I know she knows because we've had a few conversations—that no one in this province should be wondering if they'll get paid following a hard day's work. We have the Employment Standards Act that is in place, which has protected people in the past.

The world of work is changing. I understand that, and certainly what we need to do is ensure that the legislation we have in place in the province of Ontario that covers workers within the province and those workers who come from outside the province has the sort of regulations that suit the needs of the workers themselves and suit the wishes of the people here in the province of Ontario.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about Bill 73, Smart

Growth for Our Communities Act, which he introduced in the Legislature a few weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, you and most colleagues in this House will know that I had a 17-year career as a city councillor and I was chair of Toronto's Planning and Growth Management Committee. During that time I advocated for many of the changes proposed in this bill. Now I'm very proud to be part of a government that is making meaningful changes to the planning process in this province that will increase the accountability and transparency of local decision-making and improve the way for municipalities to fund growth through changes to the Development Charges Act.

My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Could he explain some of the important changes that are being proposed in Bill 73, both to planning regulations and also to development charges?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd love to. I want to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and note, through you, Speaker, that we consulted widely with stakeholders across Ontario. We heard that Ontarians wanted greater say in the planning process, and if this act is passed that will happen. We'll also provide some ways to assist municipalities to resolve disputes, and municipalities will have to put a parks plan in place to make sure we handle money in lieu of parks. I think I left myself time for a supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: The changes that are being proposed in this act will, in part, allow municipalities to have more of the final say in local planning matters by restricting some of the ability to appeal certain matters to the Ontario Municipal Board. They'll also provide municipalities more ability to raise funds to pay for important growth-related initiatives in their communities, but also make that far more transparent to those who pay those charges, be they developers or homeowners that buy those new properties. This was part of the Premier's mandate letter to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House how the proposed changes to the Development Charges Act will actually work and what other changes are being contemplated to the municipal planning process that he might be bringing to the House in the coming months?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I deeply appreciate the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's supplemental question and his ongoing commitment to making things better for Ontario municipalities.

I can say, through you, Mr. Speaker, that our proposed changes to the Development Charges Act aim to give more municipalities further opportunities to invest in growth-related infrastructure like transit and recycling. It would make land use fee collection systems more transparent and accountable, and would support curbing urban sprawl in favour of livable, walkable communities that will help create jobs and grow our community.

The member is right: The Premier has given me a mandate letter. My mandate is clear. We as a government

intend not only to fulfill my mandate, but the mandates of all members here.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Perth–Wellington on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce Dan Mathieson, who is the chair of MPAC and also the mayor of the city of Stratford, which is in my riding of Perth–Wellington. Welcome, Dan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome members and researchers from the Council of Ontario Universities. They are visiting the House today and they're having their reception in room 228.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A point of order: In reference to August 28, 2012, there was a unanimous resolution in this Legislature supported by all parties with respect to the cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program.

Today, a provincial court has ordered the government as well as the OLG to produce documents related to the cancellation of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's actually not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are other ways in which you can obtain that information. This is not a point of order.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Over the lunch hour, I encountered Councillor Mike Akpata from the town of LaSalle, who was here today. Mike is a member of the Windsor police force and, Speaker, as you know, he'll be the sergeant major on parade, colour party, for the police memorial service that will be held on the first Sunday in May. Thanks to you, they'll be doing it on the grounds instead of in the park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Half introduction, half statement: That's good.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last week, we learned that hydro bills are set to increase yet again. Next year, electricity bills will increase by a reported average of \$137 a year, and that doesn't take into account the two

planned time-of-use adjustments that will hike hydro rates this year. It's an increase that many individuals, families, seniors and businesses cannot afford.

Electricity costs in Ontario are now amongst the highest in North America. Over the last four years, it's reported that off-peak electricity prices have increased by over 50%. In 2013, the government's own estimates showed that they planned to hike electricity costs 42% by 2018.

My constituents are fed up. Many times I've spoken up for them in this Legislature. Many times we have proposed sensible solutions to make hydro more affordable. Rather than change course, the government seems intent to continue making my constituents pay for Liberal mistakes. Instead of looking out for the people, the Liberals are looking out for special interests, including multinational wind companies.

Skyrocketing hydro costs must be reined in. Livelihoods depend on it.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms. Catherine Fife: In 2010, the Auditor General reported that Ontario's Family Responsibility Office was broken. The report revealed \$1.6 billion in arrears and 1,377 cases per FRO worker, compared to other provinces' 400 cases per worker. Fewer than one quarter of cases received attention annually.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services promised that by the end of 2012, systems would be in place to ensure adequate case management, yet five months ago, CBC reported that 79% of FRO's open cases are in arrears, for a total of \$2.1 billion. Investment in a poor computer system and high caseloads leave calls unreturned.

This past November, the minister was on TVO's *The Agenda* reiterating the same old promises to cut through the backlog, but failed to provide any details.

While calls from my constituents facing problems with FRO are increasing, the government remains unable to fix FRO. One constituent, Dawn-Marie, hasn't received payment on her file since 2006, despite repeatedly providing FRO with the payor's employment information. As of this month, she is owed \$50,000. In December, the payor moved to Newfoundland. They resolved the issue very quickly, something that this province hasn't been able to do for nine years.

Families who do not receive payment are forced to rely on Ontario Works to survive. Social assistance is already stretched. It is time for this government to fix FRO and stop ignoring the most vulnerable and at-risk citizens in the province of Ontario.

MAX KHAN

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I rise today on behalf of myself and the member from Oakville in memory of a dear friend, a beloved community leader and a remarkable man who suddenly passed away this past weekend.

Max Khan was a devoted family man, a loving son to his father, Mahmood, and his mother, and a dedicated family member to his brother and sisters. He was also a devoted father to his son, and partner to his beloved Elsi.

But Max will always be remembered by the residents in Oakville and Halton as a highly respected and courageous city councillor and trial lawyer. He worked tirelessly for the people in his community. He was a volunteer, an organizer and a champion for fairness, justice and democracy.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Max well over the last few years; he helped me with both of my campaigns. He was a man who exuded confidence, strength and integrity. He was a dynamo. When he knocked on doors, he didn't walk, he ran. He loved people, loved meeting them and finding out about their challenges and trying to help them. His tireless spirit was matched only by his passion to create a better society and improve the lives of the people of Oakville and Halton. He lent his voice, his time and his energy to countless organizations throughout his community.

Max was the kind of guy who was always there to lend a helping hand. He was someone who would drop by his mom and dad's home for a visit, but before he left he would shovel their sidewalk and the neighbours' sidewalks too. I can honestly say for all of us who knew Max that we are incredibly fortunate to have had him in our lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Khan family.

KEN MONTEITH

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, today I'd like to honour a constituent of mine, Mr. Ken Monteith. Ken was born June 26, 1938, in St. Thomas, Ontario, and grew up on the family farm on Fingal Line where he still resides today.

Ken graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1957 and has held various offices throughout our riding. From 1978 to 1980, he was a councillor and deputy reeve of Southwold township, and in 1980 he became the reeve of Southwold township. Ken also served as the warden of Elgin county during his time in municipal politics. In 1988, he decided to run for the federal Progressive Conservatives and was elected as the MP for what was then our riding of Elgin-Norfolk for the 34th Parliament of Canada.

This past Saturday, Ken was inducted into the Elgin agricultural hall of fame at the Elgin Federation of Agriculture Agricultural Awards night held at the CASO Station. Not only is Ken agriculturally accomplished locally but provincially and federally as well. He has served as the chair of the Progressive Conservative's agricultural caucus and sat on the agricultural standing committee from 1988 to 1993.

Ken is an active community member, sitting on the Agri-Food Foundation at Ridgetown College, helping with the International Plowing Match and is currently the chair of the capital campaign of St. Thomas Elgin

General Hospital which is close to raising \$13 million needed for our addition at the hospital. He is actively fundraising for the United Way Elgin-St. Thomas, the CASO Station in St. Thomas, and Family and Children's Services of St. Thomas and Elgin.

Ken, on behalf of the people of Elgin-Middlesex-London, thank you, and congratulations on this tremendous accomplishment.

CAREPARTNERS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I stand today to speak for OPSEU, Local 294, the RNs and RPNs who work in four clinics, run by the for-profit CarePartners, in my riding and in the ridings of my fellow MPPs in Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant regions. This agency runs private, for-profit clinics under contract to the CCAC for key health services to patients: dialysis, wound, pediatric, diabetic and oncology care. Without these services, 1,600 patients in the region would be in long-term care or in hospital.

The employees are not getting the respect they deserve, and it's impeding their ability to serve the patients with the best quality care. These nurses are paid by visit—piecework—rather than by the hour, with no paid vacation and no compensation for overtime.

I spoke with Tristen Castro, an RPN for CarePartners and VP of the local, who said he and his colleagues are very concerned that front-line workers are being paid significantly less than not-for-profit agencies such as VON, the Victoria Order of Nurses.

How is it that the CEO of the CCAC had \$50,000 in raises in the past four years but this agency has not had any increased funds for providers in five years? Does profit come before quality of care?

It's unfortunate that CarePartners staff are left with no option but to strike on April 10 if a fair agreement is not reached. As the labour critic, a labour activist and a former RN, I stand in support of these nurses and their right to be treated with respect, and the right to a fair wage and a fair contract.

UNITED WAY OF GREATER SIMCOE COUNTY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On Friday, I had the pleasure of touring and making an announcement at the United Way of Greater Simcoe County. Director of finance and operations, John Morrison, and board treasurer, Katherine Campbell, have advised me that they expect to reach this year's milestone goal of \$2 million when officially closing the books today.

Since incorporating in 1959, this United Way, which serves my constituents of Barrie and the other residents across Simcoe, Muskoka and the town of Blue Mountains, has raised more than \$35 million—how amazing.

Through multi-sector partnerships and donor-dollar reinvestment, United Way of Greater Simcoe County expands the capacity of local charities to respond to some

of the most challenging social issues facing our growing region, including poverty and affordable housing, diversity and inclusion, mental health and opportunities for youth.

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Starting April 1, United Way of Greater Simcoe County is committed to funding 25 programs delivered by 21 local agencies, including county-wide housing resource centres, in-school mentorship programs for children across Simcoe and Muskoka, and regional seniors' programs to foster independence. By initiating successful social enterprise initiatives, including a call centre assisting low-income households with utility arrears and referrals to other community resources, they are a leader in non-profit best practices for revenue diversity.

Congratulations to the dedicated volunteers and employees of the United Way of Greater Simcoe County.

HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in the House today to recognize two exceptional hockey teams from my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. I would first like to congratulate the 2014-15 all-Ontario champions in the midget B division. The BrokerLink Parry Sound Shamrocks completed the feat against the Ayr Flames in five games, clinching the series-winning game on home ice in Parry Sound this past weekend. It was Parry Sound's first midget championship since 1996. Congratulations.

I would also like to congratulate the 2014-15 all-Ontario-champion Progressive Waste Solutions South Muskoka Bears. For the second consecutive year, they took home the title of major midget BB champs in the Ontario Minor Hockey Association. The Bears also clinched their title on home ice this past weekend in Bracebridge with a 4-2 victory over St. Marys. Anybody who has played or coached knows just how difficult it is to repeat as champions. I would like to recognize this group for accomplishing this impressive feat.

I was able to drop the puck at the opening game of the final in Gravenhurst and watched one of the Shamrocks games in Parry Sound. I must say that it made for very exciting hockey.

Finally, I would like to recognize the parents, volunteers and coaching staff who made this season possible for both teams. It is their efforts and contributions that helped to make the 2014-15 season such a success.

LE RÊVE DE CHAMPLAIN

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: J'ai le plaisir de me lever en Chambre aujourd'hui pour parler du lancement du docudrame de TFO, le Rêve de Champlain. À la suite d'un point de presse à l'ambassade de France, le lancement officiel s'est déroulé lors d'un bel événement au Musée des beaux-arts du Canada à Ottawa, le 9 mars dernier.

J'encourage tous les membres de cette Assemblée à rester à l'écoute de TFO pour avoir le plaisir de visionner cette adaptation audiovisuelle en six épisodes. C'est une adaptation du livre de l'auteur et grand spécialiste de Champlain, David Hackett Fischer, lauréat du prix Pulitzer.

Ce docudrame est un projet phare de nos commémorations du 400^e anniversaire de la présence française en Ontario, et plus de 400 personnes étaient présentes pour célébrer ce lancement, incluant la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, le commissaire aux langues officielles du Canada, le commissaire aux services en français de l'Ontario, la ministre fédérale du Patrimoine et des Langues officielles, bon nombre d'ambassadeurs de la Francophonie, et j'en passe.

C'est une série innovatrice et dynamique qui capte l'attention dès les premiers instants. Après tout, puisque le sujet principal fut navigateur, cartographe, écrivain, ethnologue, botaniste, explorateur et diplomate, il y a matière à créer tout un monde captivant. Je vous invite donc tous à regarder les prochains épisodes, qui seront sur TFO tous les lundis à 21 h, et aussi à participer aux événements entourant les célébrations du 400^e cette année.

ALEX AND TYLER MIFFLIN

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. As a great fan of TVOntario, like I am, you may be familiar with two constituents from my great riding of Beaches–East York, Alex and Tyler Mifflin, more famously known as the Water Brothers. The Water Brothers explore the world, uncovering the most important water stories of our time. Alex and Tyler have earned accolades from eco-experts worldwide, including David Suzuki, for bringing to light the many water issues that we face around the world, including here with Lake Ontario.

Born and raised in the Beach, the Water Brothers grew up steps from Lake Ontario. Growing up, they recall being told not to swim in the lake, because it was too polluted, and this memory has stayed with them and carried their passion to this day.

The brothers pitched a documentary and started brainstorming for ideas involving environmental issues facing the world, and they came to realize that so much of what they had to think about involved stories where water was the most common element. Tyler is quoted as saying, "We didn't get into this because we wanted to be on TV. We really wanted to raise awareness and educate others about water issues."

Outside of the show, the Water Brothers find other ways to educate and raise awareness that include engaging schools and students. They've even scaled Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds to combat the global water and sanitation crisis we face. They've been to over 30 countries on almost every continent, uncovering fascinating stories, and they came to realize that everywhere they went, people had a spiritual connection to water and a profound respect for it.

They once said that one of the biggest issues they face in Canada is the myth of abundance. Even though we are blessed to have an incredible abundance of water, we remain one of the largest users of water.

I encourage you all, my colleagues and you, Mr. Speaker, to tune into TVO and get educated by these two constituents from Beaches–East York, who are bringing awareness to a very important element in our society.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 31, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present the first report, 2015, from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Naidoo-Harris presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all of those who spoke and presented to the committee on this report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I didn't have a chance earlier to introduce Carly Ferguson, president of Ontario Captive Animal Watch, who is here—a trained OSPCA inspector; and Dr. Gitte Fenger, veterinarian.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with the following note enclosed: "The enclosed petition has been signed by members of St. Mary's CWL" in Tillsonburg "in the hope of parents having a say and in this case at least a look at what will be taught to their children. Thank you," from Veronica Holly in Tillsonburg.

"Whereas in 2010, the Ontario Liberal government promised to consult with voters before implementing a revised sex education curriculum;

"Whereas since 2010, the Ontario public has not been given opportunity to provide feedback on proposed sex education changes;

"Whereas in late October, 2014, the Ontario Liberal government announced that more revisions to the sex education curriculum would be implemented in time for the next school year;

"Whereas the announced plans to consult only one hand-picked parent per school does not constitute broad public feedback on the curriculum, and therefore, the Ontario Liberal government is breaking its 2010 promise to consult with the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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"To publicly release the updated version of the sexual education curriculum that will be taught in Ontario schools in September of 2015 promptly; to allow parents and educators to review the updated curriculum and provide meaningful feedback to be considered by the Ontario government in the name of transparency and accountability."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to allow me to present this petition on behalf of Veronica.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Lemieux in Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP MPP for Timiskaming-Cochrane, John Vanthof, has introduced Bill 46 in the Legislative Assembly ... so that UTVs (utility task vehicles) would be treated like all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) by the Highway Traffic Act;

"Whereas this bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect to UTVs was introduced on November 24, 2014;

"Whereas this bill will have positive economic impact on clubs, manufacturers, dealers and rental shops and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly....:

"To vote in favour of MPP Vanthof's Bill 46 to allow UTVs the same access as ATVs in the Highway Traffic Act."

I fully support this petition and will ask Natasha to bring it the Clerk.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's a pleasure to introduce this petition here today in the House.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas microbeads are tiny plastics less than one millimetre in diameter which pass through our water filtration systems and get into our rivers and the Great Lakes; and

"Whereas these microbeads represent a growing presence in our Great Lakes and are contributing to the plastic pollution of our freshwater lakes and rivers; and

"Whereas the scientific research and data collected to date has shown that microbeads that get into our water system collect toxins and organisms mistake these microbeads for food and these microbeads can move up our food chain;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario government to ban the creation and addition of microbeads to cosmetic products and all other related health and beauty products; and

"The Ministry of the Environment conduct an annual study of the Great Lakes analyzing the waters for the presence of microbeads."

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign this petition and send it to the table with Danielle.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have another petition here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill sites;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed, which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give particular emphasis to (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can be practically and efficiently recycled or reused so as to not require disposal."

I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

LGBT CONVERSION THERAPY

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2013 the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) removed transgender and gender non-conforming identities from the mental disorders category;

"Whereas LGBT youth face 14 times the risk of suicide compared to their heterosexual peers and 77% of trans respondents in an Ontario-based survey had seriously considered suicide, with 45% having already attempted suicide;

"Whereas an Ontario study found that transgender youth aged 16-24 have a 93% lower suicide rate when they feel supported by their parents in the expression of their gender identity;

"Whereas LGBT conversion therapy seeks to prohibit gender and sexual orientation expression, has no professional standards or guidelines in how it is practised and is condemned by all major professional associations of health care providers; and

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Health currently funds LGBT conversion therapy through OHIP;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health immediately cease funding all known forms of conversion therapy."

It's a pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Japneet.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school ... in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 8 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and ...

"Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist French school boards (public and Catholic) in locating an underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with this petition, sign my name and leave it with page Aiden.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a similar petition to the last one, but it is different. It was presented, again, with a lot of signatures from the great riding of Oxford.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.'...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for allowing me to present it.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I fully agree. I will affix my name and give it to Marin to take up to the desk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, I too have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I, too, support this petition. I send it to the desk with page Alycia.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have another petition here. It has been sent to me by Fatima Vieira-Cabral, from Woodstock.

"Whereas in 2010, the Ontario Liberal government promised to consult with voters before implementing a revised sex education curriculum;

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"Whereas since 2010, the Ontario public has not been given opportunity to provide feedback on proposed sex education changes;

"Whereas in late October, 2014, the Ontario Liberal government announced that more revisions to the sex education curriculum would be implemented in time for the next school year;

"Whereas the announced plans to consult only one hand-picked parent per school does not constitute broad public feedback on the curriculum, and therefore, the Ontario Liberal government is breaking its 2010 promise to consult with the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To publicly release the updated version of the sexual education curriculum that will be taught in Ontario schools in September of 2015 promptly; to allow parents and educators to review the updated curriculum and provide meaningful feedback to be considered by the Ontario government in the name of transparency and accountability."

I affix my signature to this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mrs. Helen Benoit, from the Family Council Network Four. It has 410 signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

"Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g. to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

"Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

"(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

"(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers."

I will ask Jessie to bring it to the Clerk.

FISHING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario hunting and fishing regulation summaries are printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to hunters and recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas these valuable documents are readily available for hunters and anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, hunt camp and trailer to be fully informed of the current hunting and fishing regulations; and

"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario hunting and fishing regulation summaries such that even major licence issuers and large hunting and fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

"Whereas hunters and anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately return the production of the Ontario hunting and fishing regulation summaries to previous years' quantities such that all hunters and anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals

for Research Act with respect to the possession and breeding of orcas and administrative requirements for animal care / *Projet de loi 80, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche en ce qui concerne la possession et l'élevage d'épaulards ainsi que les exigences administratives relatives aux soins dispensés aux animaux.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 80. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, as well.

It's my honour to begin second reading of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2015. This bill amends the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and makes related amendments to the Animals for Research Act. These amendments, if passed by this House, will prohibit the future possession or breeding of orcas in Ontario.

It would also enable a framework for animal welfare committees, or AWCs, which would ensure planning, protection and oversight for animal care. This includes access to vets with expertise in marine mammals, and enhanced record-keeping.

To put these proposed amendments in context, let's step back a bit.

Members may be interested to learn that the original OSPCA Act was passed in this building in 1919. Indeed, for over 100 years, the OSPCA has been dedicated to the well-being of animals, saving countless animals from dangerous situations and improving conditions for animals everywhere.

Our government has been working for a number of years to make sure all animals in Ontario are protected and kept safe. In 2009, this government implemented stronger animal protection legislation and stiffer penalties, including jail, fines and a potential lifetime ownership ban, for those who abuse animals. We put additional oversight and rules in place for roadside zoos. We required veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, and introduced measures to protect them from liability for doing so. We also enabled the OSPCA to inspect places where animals are kept for entertainment, exhibition, boarding, sale or hire. We introduced added penalties for harming law-enforcement service animals, such as dogs and horses.

In short, Ontario developed the strongest animal protection in all of Canada, with a commitment to remain diligent when it came to the care and protection of our animals.

But we did not stop there. We continued to listen and we acted to make sure that our standards were as strong as possible. That is why in October 2012, my predecessor, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, now the Attorney General, set out a framework to further strengthen animal welfare enforcement, with a three-point plan.

This plan would (1) improve province-wide enforcement of animal protection measures in the OSPCA Act and strengthen governance of the OSPCA; (2) develop a registry for the province's zoos and aquariums; and (3) create new regulations to further protect marine mammals in captivity.

Since that time, our government has been busy moving that plan forward with measures to strengthen animal protection in all parts of the province and enhance accountability between the government and the OSPCA. Our government increased our annual funding to the OSPCA from \$500,000 to \$5.5 million annually, improving the OSPCA's ability and capacity to carry on their good and important work.

Let me further explain each part of this plan.

First, we established province-wide animal protection enforcement. This was done by improving coverage to underserved areas of the province, such as rural and northern communities, and supporting investigative efforts throughout the OSPCA network.

We also created the Major Case Management Team responsible for coordinating investigations that require specialized expertise. This team, for example, is helping to crack down on and combat illegal puppy and kitten mills.

We also established a province-wide toll-free hotline number to report suspected cases of animal abuse. This new toll-free number, 310-SPCA, is supported by a 24/7 call centre with the ability to dispatch OSPCA investigators as required. The call centre's around-the-clock operation ensures timely and strategic responses to complaints of animal abuse and neglect across the province.

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We're supporting the OSPCA to conduct regular inspections of all zoos and aquariums, and to develop and maintain a registry of these facilities to support a minimum of twice-yearly inspections at each zoo and aquarium in the province. There are over 60 zoos and aquariums in Ontario, more than all other provinces combined.

In addition, the OSPCA agreed to provide regular progress reports to the government to ensure that our enforcement goals are being met and that the public is getting value for its investment. For the first time in history, a ministry representative now attends meetings of the OSPCA board of directors.

This is a government driven by results. I'm proud, Speaker, to share some of the results of those measures: The Major Case Management Team has been deployed more than a dozen times since its inception; every zoo and aquarium in the province is being inspected at least twice; and more than 22,000 calls have been logged by the 24/7 centralized dispatch.

Today, we begin to complete this picture. There was one final component to the three-point plan, which leads to why I'm speaking to this House today.

Marine mammals are complex animals, and our government cares very deeply for these magnificent and complex creatures. In October 2003, we asked Dr. David

Rosen, a respected marine biologist with the University of British Columbia, to lead a team of experts to prepare a report on the care and maintenance of marine mammals in captivity. Dr. Rosen's report is available on the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services' website. Ultimately, his report showed that our current standards are inadequate, what areas need new standards and what the elements of those standards should be.

Let me offer some highlights from his report. Facilities that hold marine mammals must meet their physical and psychological environmental needs. Consideration, for example, must be given to the environment in which marine mammals live. They must be given sufficient space for species-appropriate activities such as swimming and play. The water supply must be reliable and contribute to the good health and well-being of marine mammals. Each facility must provide suitable social and environmental enrichment programs. Facilities must ensure that marine mammals are not harmed in their contact with the general public. Facilities that allow public contact with marine mammals must have programs that minimize potential risks to the health and safety of the marine mammals and to the families who come out to see them.

The UBC report has provided our government with the foundation to introduce new standards of care for marine mammals such as dolphins, beluga whales and walrus that will be among the best in the world. These new standards—which are separate from this legislation—which I will be speaking about shortly, will be brought forward this summer. They will ensure both greater protection and improved treatment for marine mammals in areas such as: the size of pools used to house them; environmental considerations such as bacteria content, noise and lighting; and regulations for the handling and display of marine mammals.

We're now working with a team of expert scientists, animal advocates, industry and enforcement who are providing advice on these new standards. When these enhanced standards are brought forward this summer, Ontario will be the first province in Canada with these important protections. That is something we can all be proud of.

It has been while looking closely at this issue and developing these new standards of care that we concluded that orcas, sometimes referred to as killer whales, should be handled differently than beluga whales and dolphins.

Orcas are the largest of the marine mammals in captivity in Ontario and anywhere else. They are over twice the length and four times the mass of a beluga, the next-largest marine mammal in captivity. They are very social mammals and normally live in pods of five to 30 whales in the wild. Some pods combine to form a group of 100 whales or more. Orcas typically dive 500 feet or more and can swim up to 100 miles per day—the approximate distance from this Legislature to Belleville, just to put it in context.

These unique features and the extraordinary magnitude of the orca led us to determine that their well-being in captivity would be especially difficult to ensure, and so we would end this practice in Ontario. As such, our proposed amendments to the OSPCA Act would immediately prohibit the possession and breeding of orcas in Ontario. Failure to do so could result in initial penalties of up to \$60,000 and/or imprisonment of up to two years upon conviction. Upon conviction, the court would be able to order an entity to remove an orca from Ontario within a set period of time. Failure to comply with a court order could result in the entity being liable, on conviction, to a fine of up to \$250,000 and up to two years' imprisonment.

Along with the proposed amendments to the OSPCA Act to prohibit possession and breeding of orcas, our government is also introducing related amendments to the Animals for Research Act. These amendments enable the prohibition against orca possession and breeding to extend to facilities regulated under that particular act. They could allow for the establishment of additional standards that require management, oversight practices, professional services, and the collecting and disclosing of information intended to ensure the appropriate level of care of an animal, including marine mammals.

The proposed amendments to the OSPCA Act will also enable the requirement for zoos and aquariums to have animal welfare committees on location. These animal management committees are consistent with the recommendations of the UBC report by Dr. Rosen and best practices in research facilities that care for marine mammals. They will provide the necessary oversight to help ensure the long-term well-being of marine mammals in a facility's care.

The amendments, if passed, will establish the frameworks for a written animal management plan, access to a qualified veterinarian with expertise in marine mammal medicine, and a written veterinary care program, which should include an annual physical examination of each marine mammal.

In conclusion, the people of Ontario demand high standards of care for animals anywhere in the province, regardless of their habitat. With these amendments, our government is taking the next big step on stronger protections for marine mammals to ensure that these unique and complex animals receive the best possible treatment and care. Prohibiting the future possession and breeding of orcas, as part of the larger package of introducing enhanced new standards of care for marine mammals that will be among the best in the world, is something that Ontarians expect and these animals deserve. These amendments build on our government's ongoing efforts to have and maintain the strongest animal protection laws in Canada.

I am looking forward to hearing the debate on this important piece of legislation in this House. I urge all members to support this very important legislation that will ensure we've got a higher standard of care for our marine mammals in Ontario.

Speaker, at this point, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River will continue the debate and speak on the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to join the minister in speaking in support of our government's proposed amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, and to join the growing chorus of Ontarians and people around the world who are demanding better care and treatment for marine mammals.

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The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is a large and complex organization. In addition to animal welfare, they are responsible for law enforcement; community safety and well-being; the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders; fire safety and prevention; and forensic and death investigations.

Speaker, we get a lot of mail. Correspondence about animal welfare and the protection of marine mammals routinely tops the list. This is a real credit to our caring society.

I am sure we're all familiar with the words of Gandhi: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act is the next important step on a journey our government began in 2009 by substantially amending the OSPCA Act.

The path we're on today will lead to standards of care for marine mammals in Ontario that will be among the best in the world. These standards, when they're brought forward this summer, will be the result of this government's work and input from a special technical advisory group. The group is made up of animal science and veterinary specialists, animal welfare, business and enforcement stakeholders. They will provide valuable advice on new enhanced standards of care and how they should be implemented. These proposed amendments, if passed, will authorize the making of administrative requirements in addition to these new standards of care.

The OSPCA Act, in its present form, already enables the government to move forward with enhanced science-based standards of care for marine mammals in captivity. It also enables the government to introduce species-appropriate standards of care for Kiska, the sole orca in Ontario, currently living at Marineland, a themed amusement and animal exhibition park in Niagara Falls, Ontario. It provides the OSPCA with the authority to conduct inspections and issue orders to ensure that standards of care are complied with.

But the OSPCA Act does not go far enough, Mr. Speaker. Alongside physical considerations, including the size of enclosures, and environmental considerations, such as water quality, noise and lighting, the University of British Columbia report made it very clear that consideration must be given to administrative oversight.

We are talking about things such as an animal management plan, access to a qualified veterinarian with expertise in marine mammal medicine, and a written veterinary care program. This is part of what these amendments set out to do. If the bill is passed, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services' regulation-making authority would be expanded to enable prescribing new standards of care that address these types of administrative and oversight requirements related to the keeping of animals.

After seeking the advice of the technical advisory group, the minister will then prescribe new administrative requirements through regulation. Depending on the advice we receive, here is a detailed look at some of what could be addressed through this proposed new regulation-making authority.

If passed, the legislation would permit creating new standards of care that would require all zoos and aquariums with marine mammals to keep a written animal management plan.

One potential new standard of care could require each facility to have access to a qualified veterinarian with expertise in marine mammal medicine. This veterinarian could oversee a program of preventive veterinary medicine and clinical care for all marine mammals.

Another potential new standard of care could require each facility to have a written veterinary care program. This new standard could also get into the finer points of this type of program, including a program to be developed by a veterinarian in collaboration with other experts such as biologists, trainers and curators.

The new standards of care would require the animal management plan, veterinary care program and all other information related to marine mammals' welfare be kept current and available for disclosure.

To oversee the welfare and management of marine mammals, the bill, if passed, may require each zoo and aquarium to establish an animal welfare committee. In addition, these new standards of care could address considerations regarding human interaction with marine mammals at an exhibition park. All of these new potential standards would be enacted via regulations under the OSPCA Act and each would be the result from the technical advisory group and our assessment of that input.

The bill also proposes that the breeding and possession of orcas will be prohibited, effective immediately. Orcas are also referred to as "killer whales." Members might be interested to know that the orca is actually the largest member of the dolphin family. Related amendments to the Animals for Research Act ensure that facilities governed by that act are subject to the same prohibitions on orcas as zoos and aquariums.

While Ontario would be the first province in Canada to introduce standards of care specific to marine mammals, we are not the only jurisdiction considering legislation to prohibit the possession or breeding of orcas. Both New York and California are considering similar legislation. We have a responsibility to ensure the wel-

fare of whales and dolphins held in captivity in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

If these amendments are passed, how would this prohibition work? There is nothing preventing a zoo or aquarium from going out and acquiring an orca today, even, although it is highly unlikely. Any orca acquired after this bill was first introduced on Monday, March 23, of this year, but before royal assent—would be granted six months after assent to remove the animal. Once the orca prohibitions take effect, any person or facility that acquires an orca would be immediately subject to charges.

Penalties would run from up to a \$60,000 fine and/or two years' imprisonment upon first conviction, and up to \$250,000 and/or two years' imprisonment if a court order is subsequently ignored. The court would also be able to order the OSPCA to remove the orca from Ontario. In addition to penalties that may be imposed, the offender can be liable to compensate the OSPCA for costs incurred in relocating the orca. A \$60,000 fine and/or two years' imprisonment are consistent with existing penalties for persons found to be non-compliant with standards of care.

These proposed amendments to the OSPCA Act provide a framework for the management and oversight of marine mammals. It prohibits the future possession or breeding of orcas; it enforces stiff penalties for anyone who violates the prohibition—but as we all know, the teeth of any bill is in the enforcement. The OSPCA will continue to enforce compliance with standards of care. This bill would not grant the OSPCA additional inspection authority. However, if passed, it would grant the OSPCA the authority to demand that facilities provide records and any other information on an animal's care and management within a specified time frame. This would ensure that the prescribed standards are being complied with. While currently the OSPCA can demand a facility's records during an inspection of a place where animals are kept, this authority will be separated from the process of conducting an inspection.

The bill also proposes to clarify that the OSPCA's authority to inspect a facility includes all places where animals may be kept for the purpose of exhibition, entertainment, boarding, hire or sale. This includes off-season locations. Human dwellings have always been exempt from this inspection authority, and they will continue to be.

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Our government has considered the impact of these proposed amendments. There are no significant compliance costs associated with the prohibition on the possession and breeding of orcas in Ontario. However, future regulations on new standards of care for marine mammals, including new standards for management and oversight as permitted under these new proposed amendments, may result in additional compliance costs.

Still, our number one priority must be with the proper care and humane treatment of marine mammals. Proper care, management and habitat design will help the prov-

ince to address the unique challenges faced by these magnificent creatures.

Speaker, I call on all members of this House to support this piece of legislation. Hopefully, it will be passed very quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: We have no orcas in Prince Edward-Hastings. There's really good fishing, though, on the Bay of Quinte. Actually, it's the walleye capital of Ontario. If you're in the mood for a good fishing vacation, make your way to the Bay of Quinte region, and you'll enjoy yourself for sure.

I listened with interest to the minister, and then the parliamentary assistant as well, on this bill. Without going too deep into the details—because my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex has a full hour that he'll be using up this afternoon to talk about the intricacies of this bill and what it might actually mean in the province of Ontario—this is an interesting piece of legislation to bring out now, at a time when we have a budget that's about to come out.

Today we learned that the deficit in the province of Ontario isn't getting smaller. The deficit is getting larger. The finance minister, at an event during the noon hour today, confirmed that the deficit is actually going from \$10.5 billion to \$10.9 billion for the upcoming year. So the deficit is getting larger. In spite of what they're trying to spin over there, the deficit in Ontario is getting larger, which makes it more of a precarious slope that we're on right now in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think it's appropriate to remind the members that questions and comments are expected, by the Chair, to relate back to the speech that was given, so I would ask the member for Prince Edward-Hastings to speak to the members' remarks.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, and I appreciate that. Where I was going with this is, Mr. Speaker, that's one killer whale of a deficit that we have in Ontario, and it's something that we really should look at eliminating.

I thank you for the two minutes to address the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We, as New Democrats, are going to support this bill. We're going to put forward a number of amendments.

But I want to tell you the story of Kiska. Kiska was mentioned by the minister. Kiska is 40 years old. She's going to live to be maybe 70 to 90 years old, so she's only halfway through her lifespan. She's a social animal. The OSPCA and the regulations already say that she shouldn't be alone.

Orcas have a portion of their brain that is very similar to humans—in fact, it's one of the most similar brains to humans'. It has a seat of emotion that we don't see in other animal brains.

To keep Kiska where she is is like keeping a human being in a bathtub in solitary confinement. I want you to

think about a lifetime spent in a bathtub in solitary confinement. That's where Kiska is at. That's why we have a veterinarian sitting here: Because we know that the facility where she is is under investigation for their veterinary practices by the college of veterinarians right now.

Think of poor Kiska: 100% of her infants have died, one after the other, all in infancy. To add insult to injury, I just found out that on the facility's homepage there is a picture of a trainer with his hand up her vagina, and that is not an unparliamentary word. We should be ashamed at the treatment of this animal.

This bill will not change her treatment. So we need this ministry to act, and I know it's their intention to do so. We need quick action. We need to do better for this orca. As she has lived out her life to date, we want to make sure the rest of her life is a whole lot better. I'll be saying a lot more in subsequent comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Marine mammals are complex, diverse and magnificent creatures with unique needs that require the right standards of care. However, they are far more magnificent and awe-inspiring when they are in their natural environment. That is why our government introduced the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, Bill 80. It is very important that we get this bill passed. Our government is committed to the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity, because that is what Ontarians expect and that is what these animals deserve.

The students in Ontario classrooms believe that these wonderful creatures deserve the best care as well. They are in favour of this. You might think that they aren't, but my little kindergarteners, when we talked about this, made it very clear that they think they should be free in the ocean where they belong.

Our legislation builds on existing protections and follows through on our government's commitment to develop the best standards and protections for marine mammals in captivity. But we're not stopping with this legislation; we're taking the next step. We have consulted with experts, and we believe that this bill is the best thing for all marine animals. You have a much better look at marine animals on the Internet or somewhere else than if you've ever gone to Marineland—and I must tell you that one of the most wonderful trips our family ever had was to Marineland, but the part that my children liked the best was at the petting zoo. It was not watching poor Kiska. If you have ever been sprayed by that water from Kiska's pool, you know that we need this legislation. You would walk around for the rest of the day smelling quite nasty because of that pool water.

We need to pass this bill immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the opening remarks by the government on this bill. I do

know that our critic will be speaking in the next few minutes on his opening in representing the official opposition of the Legislature. I do know that we'll be taking a cautious, careful approach in review of this legislation to ensure that it's reasonable and fair going forward.

What I wish was being talked about here today is the commercial fishing industry, especially along Lake Erie, which has its good and bad days. I wish the government would take a more proactive approach with regard to the commercial fishing industry, especially when there's talk that perhaps the quota is going to be cut 25% in zone 3 of Lake Erie. That is quite a concern to the local economy—let alone knowing that the fish populations from the biologists from the commercial fishing industry are at the correct levels.

But this bill is being brought forward in the midst of the government announcing their deficit increasing this year, as opposed to last year. I'm afraid it might be a little bit of a red herring to take us off target—off talk about debt, the deficit, hydro and the cost of living, which has shot through the roof in this province, making it harder for families and individuals to make life affordable and pleasant for them. We should be discussing this more often in this Legislature and making changes to rules and regulations and laws so that people can actually survive and live in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I look to the member for Scarborough—Rouge River to reply.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm happy to provide a few comments in response to the member from Prince Edward—Hastings, who went through an elaborate process but just mentioned the bill, probably, in two words. To my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, I take her comments seriously. To my colleague from Barrie, I want to thank her for all her comments and for being supportive of the bill. As she said, it's something that is absolutely necessary at this time. Then my friend from Elgin—Middlesex—London in his comments said that he is going to be very cautious and take a good look at it.

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I say to everyone, this is about protecting the animals. But as I mentioned in my deliberation, the ministry gets a lot of mail, and this file has probably the most mail we receive on many occasions. Some of you may remember the incident at Marineland a couple of years ago. This is as a result of that. The government is taking action, as requested by the public.

I think this is the job we're here for. We're here to respond to the public when there's a serious concern, especially when it comes to animal welfare. Animals can't express to you their dissatisfaction like human beings can. We have to take the lead from the public, which has seen what has happened in that situation. As a government, we have to take the appropriate action to make sure we protect these animals.

This bill is just another step in the right direction to provide the community with what they were asking us to do. We're looking at experts in the field who will provide

us with a management plan and a proper care plan so that anyone who has one of these mammals in captivity would be required to do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to listen to the debate, and I hope that we would allow the bill to go through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today to lead off debate on behalf of the PC caucus for Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, 2015.

First of all, I will begin by saying thank you to my page for bringing a couple of glasses of water. I'll probably need them since I'll be speaking for about an hour. Thank you for that.

On another note, I will be looking at this at a high level, at the changes that the bill will bring and other acts that would, in fact, be impacted by this bill.

It looks like Ontario is getting back into the business of prohibition—yes, in this case, prohibition of the possession of, or breeding of, orcas. It would become illegal to possess or breed an orca here in Ontario if this legislation is passed. This prohibition does not apply to orcas possessed on the day prior to the bill's introduction.

It comes at a time, though, when Ontario finds itself setting all-time records for the number of orcas that were brought into the province last year. Actually, it was an all-time low of zero orcas bred or brought into Ontario during 2014. This exemption is essentially the Marine-land clause, as they possess the only captive orca in Ontario.

At any rate, if a person just happens to acquire an orca after the introduction of the bill, but before royal assent, they would be granted six months after assent to cease to possess the whale. If a person acquires one after royal assent, they are immediately subject to charges. So to the countless viewers at home who are about to head out to purchase a whale, don't bother.

A person found to possess an orca acquired after the introduction of the bill would be liable, on conviction, of a fine of not more than \$60,000 and imprisonment of up to two years. That is a really steep penalty, Mr. Speaker. You could find yourself being sent to Ontario's brand-new superjail, a model for the rest of the province: Toronto South Detention Centre, which has somehow been operational for over a year without any infirmary. You really don't want to end up there. Luckily, they've started to hire medical staff—a year after opening. That's great news—now it's great news.

But it really is astounding to see attention paid by this ministry to humane conditions. I say that because this is the same ministry that opened two new facilities for humans to stay in, the Toronto South and the South West Detention Centre, which I happened to have toured back in the fall because it's down in the Windsor area, close to my great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Of course, when we talk about those two new facilities, they didn't have an infirmary or mental health unit. Most would say that's quite inhumane. The government

is obviously instead focusing on getting the number of orcas bred or brought into Ontario down to zero, all the way from a staggering zero last year.

The Animals for Research Act would also be amended so that the orca prohibitions would apply to registered research and research supply facilities, which will continue to be exempt from animal care standards in the OSPCA Act. There are also zero orcas being held in research facilities in Ontario, with none on the way, by the way.

Despite all of the media focus given to the orca ban, it is actually only a small component of this bill. Much of the true impact of the bill will be found within the sections that seek to expand the number of powers the minister has without specifying what exactly those powers will be and if he will use those powers for good.

This bill seeks to expand the minister's regulation-making authority to include prescribing administrative requirements related to keeping of animals, including the establishment of animal welfare committees, animal care plans, veterinary care programs and mandated record-keeping and disclosure. In fact, Speaker, these requirements will come through future regulatory change.

A technical advisory group, as has been mentioned on the government side, will, in fact, be established. They have been talking with various groups at this point in time. This particular advisory group will report in six months with suggestions for the final standards and a timeline for their implementation. The group is comprised of experts from science, industry, advocacy and enforcement.

This builds on the work of Dr. David Rosen and his team, who were, by the way, tasked by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to author a report in regard to developing standards of care for marine mammals in captivity and how best to ensure the most humane treatment for captive marine mammals. Interestingly enough, the committee specifically states in their report that they were not to comment on which animals can or cannot be kept safely in captivity.

The Rosen report also makes a clear recommendation to follow the national standards of care and maintenance for marine mammals, which the province may not have appreciated, as they want to create their own special set of standards.

The power to inspect would be amended to make it clear that all of the places, excluding owners' private dwellings, where animals are kept, including the off-season locations, may be inspected if the animals are kept for the purpose of exhibition, boarding, hire or sale. OSPCA inspectors would be able to demand the production of records without physically inspecting the site. The ministry has claimed that inspectors currently cannot view records of animal care.

Before we dive deep into the content of this bill, Speaker, it would be helpful to those watching this debate to provide some background information on marine mammals and orcas. In the strictest sense, a marine mammal would be defined as any mammal that

makes the sea its home for part of or all of its life. This category includes cetaceans. That includes whales, dolphins, porpoises, pinnipeds, seals, sea lions, the noble walrus, marine mustelids—that would be like the sea otter and the marine otter—and, of course, the polar bear.

Whales are obviously marine mammals, as are dolphins, porpoises, seals, sea lions, manatees, the dugong and the sea otter. Polar bears are considered marine mammals but were left out of this discussion as they are treated more as a land animal in zoos.

The world's present-day cetacean fauna consists of more than 80 species. One of the most famous species is the orca, commonly referred to as the killer whale. For those at home who might be wondering if the killer whale is the one that is black and white—yes, kind of dressed the way I am today, in black and white. Also, perhaps, they may be more familiar with the movie *Free Willy*. *Free Willy* was, in fact, a killer whale.

For the sake of variety, I'll be using two terms interchangeably throughout my speech, simply to avoid saying the word "orca" hundreds of times over the next hour.

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The killer whale's exposure on television, in movies and at aquariums throughout the world has made the species an icon. As recently as the 1960s, killer whales, also known as orcas, were feared and persecuted. However, after a few were brought into captivity and trained, the public's view of them became transformed.

Today, these whales are much beloved. While public opinion and public policy in many jurisdictions is changing in regard to captivity, the captivity of orcas did play a part in the change of public perception of orcas that led to a decrease in the hunting of the whales as populations of people were able to see first-hand how majestic and worthy of protection they truly are.

Killer whales are among the most well-known cetaceans, thanks mainly to the work of research based out of the west coast of North America. For more than four decades, these researchers have studied the pods of whales that live off Washington, British Columbia and Alaska.

The world population of killer whales seems to consist of specialized subpopulations, each adapted to live off the resources available within its home range. In this sense, they share a trait with people, as we can also eat a wide variety of foods but tend to depend largely on what food can be found in our habitats. Their diet is largely dependent upon what is available around them, and they are well-suited hunters—they are, in fact, well-suited hunters who can readily adapt to the prey of the area.

Inquisitive and approachable in nature, orcas can be observed engaging in a wide variety of activities. Both adults and juveniles frequently breach, making graceful leaps out of the water and landing on their backs, sides or stomachs with a noisy splash. Just like juvenile humans, juvenile orcas are more adventurous than their elders. They often attempt more dramatic twists and turns than

adults. I believe, Speaker, that has something to do with age, as we humans realize the same thing.

Spy-hopping is another activity enjoyed by orcas. When spy-hopping, the orca slowly rises out of the water until its head and most of its flippers are above the surface. It almost looks as if it is standing up and peeking out of the water. That's actually what they're doing. They can scan the horizon while spy-hopping. They then slowly sink back down out of sight. Several killer whales may spy-hop together, which would be a great sight. A bunch of bobbing killer whales would surely be something to see.

The killer whale's body is extremely robust. The average birth weight of an orca is 395 pounds, or 180 kilograms. Adult weight ranges between 2.6 tonnes and nine tonnes. The head is conical and lacks a well-defined beak. The dorsal fin, situated at the mid-back, is large, prominent and highly variable in shape. On males, the dorsal fin can reach a height of three feet or six feet. I'm more familiar with feet and inches, Mr. Speaker, but that works out to about one metre to 1.8 metres. Flippers are large, broad and rounded. There are 10 to 14 pairs of large pointed teeth in both the upper and lower jaws. The colour pattern consists of iconic, highly contrasting areas of, as I mentioned earlier, black and white.

Considered the most widespread cetacean, the killer whale is truly cosmopolitan and is not limited by such habitat features as water temperature or even depth. It occurs in the highest densities at high latitudes, especially in areas with an abundance of prey. Its movements generally appear to track those of favoured prey species or to take advantage of increases in prey abundance or vulnerability, such as during times and in areas of fish spawning or even seal pupping.

Studies in northwest North America suggest that there are two genetically distinct forms of killer whale, known as transients and residents. Transients tend to form smaller pods of one to seven whales, roam over a wider area, feed predominantly on mammals, vocalize less frequently, make abrupt changes in swimming direction, and often stay under water for five to 15 minutes at a time. I'm out of breath just thinking about that, Speaker. They also have more pointed, centrally positioned dorsal fins than residents.

Residents, in fact, tend to form larger pods between five and 25 whales. They also have smaller home ranges, at least in summer months. They feed mainly on fish, vocalize quite frequently, keep to relatively predictable routes, and rarely stay under water for more than four minutes at a time.

In killer whales there are marked differences in the sexes. Males are longer and bulkier than females. The average male length is 24 feet, or 7.3 metres. The average length of females is 20 feet, or 6.2 metres. There's also, by the way, a great difference in the size and shape of their dorsal fins.

Orcas are seen more often in cooler waters, especially in the polar regions, than in the tropics or sub-tropics. Sightings can range from surf zones to open sea, though

they usually occur within 800 kilometres, or 500 miles, of the shoreline. Large concentrations can be found over the continental shelf. Generally, orcas prefer deeper water, but are often found in shallow bays, inland seas and estuaries, but rarely in rivers.

Killer whales have no regular long migrations themselves, but some local movements occur according to changing ice cover in colder regions in higher latitudes and food availability elsewhere, such as hunting a migrating group of prey—they're essentially coming along for the ride. Stranding can happen, but is rare and usually involves males. Males tend to be the ones engaging in riskier behaviour.

In the Antarctic during summer, killer whales position themselves near the ice edge and in channels within the pack ice where they prey on baleen whales, penguins and seals. It is uncertain how far or where they migrate. Some may remain in Antarctic waters year-round.

In the Arctic, killer whales rarely move close along or into the pack ice. Researchers studying killer whales in Washington and British Columbia have identified resident and transient pods, although both types of pods are present year-round. Some occupy very large ranges. For example, photo identification studies have found that some killer whales move between Alaska and, in fact, California.

The basic social unit of resident killer whales in Washington and British Columbia is a matrilineal group consisting of two to four generations of two to nine related individuals. These groups are stable over long periods of time, and all members may contribute to calf-rearing. A number of groups that spend much of their time together form what is called a pod. The largest resident pod in the area of Washington and British Columbia consists of close to 60 of these mammals.

Resident pods greet one another by facing off in two tight lines and then mingling in a relaxed manner as if to reassure social bonds. They're social creatures. They need to be around other killer whales, other orcas. This is similar to the observed human behaviour of school dances.

Killer whales often breach and slap the surface with their flukes and flippers. They exhibit various responses to boats and other vessels ranging from indifference to curiosity.

Mass strandings occur occasionally, and pods sometimes become trapped in tidal ponds or inlets. Wind-blown or fast-forming ice can be a hazard for orcas in the Arctic regions.

In the resident population off Washington and British Columbia, calving occurs year-round, with a peak between autumn and spring. Right now, as we stand and debate this bill right here in the Legislature, they're at their peak.

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Females usually stop producing at around 40 years of age. Interestingly, Kiska, the orca at Marineland, is either past or will soon be finished her breeding. I spoke with members from Marineland, and they said she is still able

to breed. However, this bill will in fact have little effect, as she likely won't be able to produce offspring anyway—at least, that is the assumption. Studies of whales in captivity suggest that gestation lasts 15 to 18 months, so she wouldn't really be able to anyway, because she's in complete isolation right now.

Although killer whales begin eating solid food at a very young age, they continue to nurse for at least a year and may not be fully weaned until close to two years of age. Killer whales eat a diet ranging from small schooling fish and squid to large baleen and sperm whales. Their prey items include sea turtles, otters, sharks, rays and even deer or moose, which they can catch swimming across channels. They're not picky eaters, Mr. Speaker; that's for sure. Although they are happy to eat a wide variety of foods, pods tend to specialize in hunting specific prey. For example, some depend largely on salmon, tuna or herring, while others patrol pinniped habitats or stalk migratory whale populations.

To draw a comparison to a land animal, this hunting behaviour is similar to wolves that stalk caribou populations. They follow their prey through the migratory range instead of residing in a specific area.

Like most animals, killer whales need to use co-operative hunting tactics to harass and subdue large prey. Despite their large size, there are certainly larger creatures in the ocean, and they have to work together to hunt effectively.

The same holds true when orcas hunt smaller prey. They also work as a team to come together and maintain tight balls of smaller baitfish, taking turns slicing through the schools of trapped fish to feed.

Killer whales are resourceful as well. They've been known to steal fish from longlines and scavenge on discarded fishery by-catch.

Prey are often strongly influenced by their fear of killer whales. Pinnipeds flee from the water onto land or ice, and whales and dolphins move into the near-shore shallows or hide in cracks in ice until the coast is clear.

Nature gives these magnificent creatures the respect that they deserve. They are truly awe-inspiring animals.

While, as a species, the killer whale is not endangered, whaling or live-capture operations have depleted some regional populations. Resident and transient populations off Washington and British Columbia number only in the low hundreds and are threatened by pollution, heavy ship traffic and, possibly, reduced prey availability. There is concern that intensive whale-watching operations may, in fact, influence the behaviour of killer whales.

About 8,500 killer whales are thought to reside in the eastern tropical Pacific, at least 850 in Alaskan waters, possibly close to 2,000 off the coast of Japan, and about 80,000 in the Antarctic during summer. That's almost enough orcas to form a riding. At least, Chatham-Kent is about 110,000 people, so there you have it. I'm sure that they would be in favour of this bill.

Whalers in Japan, Indonesia, Greenland and the West Indies continue to hunt killer whales. While the whales

are killed in small numbers, the effects of hunting on local populations could, in fact, be substantial.

In the wild, the killer whale is a fearsome predator whose diet can include huge, fast fish like bluefin tuna, in addition to seals, dolphins and even larger marine mammals. There are even recorded instances of orcas successfully preying on the great whales, including blue and sperm whales.

Now that I've finished playing the role of marine biologist, let's again take a look at the work done by a real team of marine biologists. Yes, I'm about to introduce the Rosen report.

Before we look at the report's considerations, we need to consider who put the report together. The committee was chaired by Dr. Rosen.

From the report: "Dr. David Rosen chaired this committee. Dr. Rosen is an expert in the physiological and behavioural ecology of marine mammals," with a bachelor of science in marine biology, and master of science and PhD degrees in biopsychology. "Dr. Rosen has published more than 60 studies of captive and wild marine mammals, including those related to bioenergetics, nutrition, behaviour, and stress. Dr. Rosen is presently a research associate with the Marine Mammal Research Unit at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, Canada), and heads the Marine Mammal Energetics and Nutrition Laboratory. He is an associate editor for the scientific journals *Aquatic Mammals* and *Frontiers in Aquatic Physiology*, and is the past president of the Comparative Nutrition Society.

"Dr. Rosen was assisted by two colleagues that served as members of this committee: Dr. Heather Koopman, a marine mammal physiologist and Dr. Colleen Reichmuth, a marine mammal behaviourist."

Clearly these are qualified experts. They delivered the following recommendations to the government last May. These are, in fact, the specific recommendations:

"(1) We recommend additional regulation(s) to supplement the OSPCA Act that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of marine mammals that are not currently covered by other relevant sections of the act. These recommendations for standards of care apply to all facilities that hold marine mammals primarily for public display. These can be broadly grouped into three overarching goals, each with a specific set of recommendations:

"i. Facilities must demonstrate responsibility to the long-term well-being of marine mammals in their care.

"a. Each facility must have an established animal welfare committee.

"b. Each facility must have a written animal management plan that provides justification for all marine mammals housed in the facility.

"c. Each facility is required to help maintain a provincial inventory of marine mammals housed in display facilities.

"d. Each facility must have access to a qualified veterinarian with expertise in marine mammal medicine, who oversees a program of preventive veterinary medicine

and clinical care for all marine mammals held in the facility, in accordance with professional standards of practice in Ontario.

"e. Each facility must have a written veterinary care program. This should be developed by a veterinarian in collaboration with other experts (biologists, trainers, curators etc.), and should include an annual physical examination of each marine mammal."

I'm going to continue with this, but I also want to mention, Speaker, having had the opportunity to address this and talk with a stakeholder in the Niagara Falls area, where Kiska is held—I'm talking about Marineland—they have some of the world's finest veterinarians there. They care. They record everything that Kiska eats. Whenever medicine is required, they record everything. They do everything above and beyond the standards. They are, in fact, in my opinion, a model representation for other places such as Marineland throughout the world. That includes also SeaWorld in California.

But I digress. Let me continue on with the Rosen report:

"e. Each facility must have a written veterinary care program. This should be developed by a veterinarian in collaboration with other experts"—I think I may have mentioned this earlier—"and should include an annual physical examination of each marine mammal.

"ii. Facilities that hold marine mammals must meet their physical and psychological environmental needs.

"f. Consideration must be given to the three-dimensional environment in which marine mammals live and the need to provide sufficient space for species-appropriate activities both in and out of the water. Therefore, it is recommended that each facility adopt a set of minimum space requirements that are based upon established, internationally recognized codes.

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"g. Marine mammals must be protected from exposure to noise that could cause auditory discomfort or distress and lead to injury.

"h. The water supply must be reliable and contribute to the good health and well-being of the marine mammals.

"i. Provisions must be made for appropriate light exposure, including consideration of the type, level, and cycle of exposure."

Continuing along with the report:

"j. Each facility must provide suitable social and environmental enrichment programs.

"iii. Facilities must ensure that marine mammals are not harmed in their contact with the general public.

"k. Facilities with public contact programs must ensure the programs are adequately designed and outfitted to minimize potential risks to the health and safety of the marine mammals and humans.

"l. Facilities with a public contact program must have a written policy that clearly identifies and addresses the safety issues and concerns for all participants in the program, including the marine mammals, and specifies the

qualifications of those conducting the public contact session.”

The second major recommendation in the Rosen report goes on to say:

“(2) We recommend additional regulation(s) through the OSPCA Act for facilities acquiring new wild-born animals. These regulations are designed to protect the welfare of cetaceans destined for public display, either through foreign or domestic acquisitions, with particular emphasis on safeguarding the health of wild populations.

“(3) We recommend the timely adoption of the Guidelines On: The Care and Maintenance of Marine Mammals established by the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) as a specific standard of care for marine mammals under the OSPCA Act.”

The government’s hand-picked expert committee recommends the following highest standards of care, set by the Canadian Council on Animal Care, the other CCAC. The purpose of the committee is as follows:

“This committee was convened by the government of Ontario’s Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in October 2013 to (1) evaluate Ontario’s current regulations pertaining to the care of marine mammals in captivity for public display, (2) consider whether current regulations are sufficient to ensure the care of these marine mammals, and, if not, to (3) suggest how existing regulations could be improved. Additionally, the committee was asked to (4) give special consideration to the welfare of cetaceans in public display facilities.”

Further, the committee explains its mandate:

“The mandate of the committee was to address the first three aims concerning regulations for the care of marine mammals in display facilities using documents in the public domain, their professional expertise, and consultations with animal care specialists, and to evaluate the broader aim concerning the welfare of captive cetaceans using their interpretation of the best scientific data available, assisted by consultations with the scientific community. As a result, this report represents the scientific perspective of the committee and does not include other viewpoints such as those concerned with social, ethical, political, and economic factors.”

This is a very important distinction, Mr. Speaker. That means that the committee of experts left political ideology out of the equation and instead focused on the best scientific data available to make informed recommendations.

“In addition, this report does not make a determination as to whether cetaceans should be kept in captivity; that issue is beyond the purview of the committee.”

It’s very interesting that the specific issue that the government is dealing with in this bill was not to be commented on by the government’s committee tasked with crafting recommendations on standards of animal care. We’d like to hear what Dr. Rosen’s thoughts would be on an orca ban and whether this would hurt the province’s only orca. But for one reason or another, that was beyond the allowed purview of the committee.

This is not an issue that comes up frequently in our province, given that Ontario only has one orca residing in the entire province. But by looking at other jurisdictions that have much more experience with orcas and with initiating similar bills, we can learn lessons in order to make sure that our own legislation is sufficient.

In April 2014, the state of California introduced somewhat similar legislation in an effort to protect orcas in the state. At the time of the bill’s introduction, a CNN report stated, “Currently, California has 10 captive killer whales, and seven of them were captive-born.”

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This might be very important for the members of the Legislature to hear, because they may be asked to speak to this a little bit later on.

California has 10 times the number of orcas in captivity as Ontario. They also have orcas living off of their shorelines. They are certainly experts when it comes to the subject. As they say, those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it. With this in mind, perhaps it would be wise to consider how California approached the issue, and what implications this approach has, as well as what lessons we can learn right here in Ontario.

We feel it is prudent to take the best practices from around the world and make sure that we’re not leaving any stone unturned when it comes to creating the best possible animal protection legislation. Any less would be a disservice.

Whales.org, an animal rights advocacy site, described the situation in California. Specifically, they noted that due to the complex nature of the issue at hand and the great importance of getting the legislation right the first time, the responsible thing to do is to wait until proper consultation can be done and more expert witnesses can lend their skills to craft a piece of legislation that is not only noble in spirit but in execution.

Whales.org’s report said that it was determined by the state that the usual period of debate was not adequate to address the issues raised by the bill, and recommended that the bill be referred to “interim study” by the committee. Such a process would be open to all stakeholders, may include public hearings on the issue, and would result in a committee report. That report is expected at some point this year.

With that in mind, we can compare the approach of the two jurisdictions. California is interested in taking an evidence-based approach and realizes that it needs to take the proper time necessary to get the bill right. They’re doing their due diligence as legislators, are bringing experts in for public hearings, and are open to friendly amendments to strengthen the bill. Here in Ontario, one can only hope that our government will share a willingness to take the time to get the legislation right, just like our counterparts in California.

We don’t want to see the government take action while only providing lip service to the hard science that is out there on this topic, as they have so far discarded most of the Rosen report to suit their political interests.

One of the largest areas of concern amongst our caucus about Bill 80 is the lack of clarity regarding which powers the minister will be able to implement. These powers will be added at a later date, away from the scrutiny of the House. That does not mean that the government does not have good intentions with this bill. It simply means that the opposition is being asked to support a bill.

These sections of the bill are basically like a connect-the-dots picture. We've been given a bunch of dots and have been asked if we like the final picture. Since we can only assume what the final picture will look like and the ministry can connect those dots in any manner it happens to see fit over the summer, it's hard to know exactly what the bill is calling for at second reading.

Many of my colleagues have some real concerns about leaving the real changes of this bill to be brought in away from public scrutiny. This is especially true amongst members who represent rural ridings. They have legitimate concerns about the lack of oversight at the OSPCA and are wary to grant additional powers without first introducing some basic accountability measures.

The following is taken from a January 2014 Toronto Star article that sheds a bit of light on the recent history of the OSPCA, some of its shortcomings, and the government's role to date: "Although the OSPCA's decisions to seize animals may be appealed to an independent review board, there is no provision for overall government oversight of the society."

This lack of sufficient oversight is something that we have serious concerns with, Speaker. Oversight is required at every single level of government. We trust the hard work done by our province's doctors and nurses, for example, but we all agree that the health sector should have very strong oversight.

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Likewise, animal health—and the agencies or groups that perform the important role of maintaining animal health—requires oversight. It really matters in the case of the OSPCA; whenever oversight is lacking, lives are put in jeopardy.

The article goes on to describe the effect of this lack of government oversight: "Critics say this omission became particularly evident in 2010 when the OSPCA euthanized animals in its Newmarket shelter to deal with a ringworm epidemic that, a later investigation found, had never existed."

"Two OSPCA veterinarians who assessed the situation on Monday gave the final call: All the animals had to die." Two OSPCA veterinarians with no oversight, as raised by several media reports and members of the opposition, made a decision that led to the unnecessary killing of dozens of animals.

Let's go back to the previous section of the Toronto Star article: "Although the OSPCA's decisions to seize animals may be appealed to an independent review board, there is no provision for overall government oversight of the society." Again: There is no provision for overall government oversight of the society. On this side

of the House, we feel that a government should bring forward basic accountability measures before expanding the powers of any agency, especially the OSPCA. That's just good government.

Don't just take the word of the official opposition. On December 13, Animal Justice released its report OSPCA Act: A Better Way Forward, A Report on the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The report had a lot to say in the interest of animals, those who work with them, farmers and private citizens who all share a common interest in protecting the health of the animals we care for.

Before we get into the report and the insights and concerns, it's important to look at who Animal Justice Canada is. From their website: "Animal Justice Canada is a Canadian registered charity ... dedicated to advancing public knowledge of animal practices and preventing the abuse and killing of animals through the enforcement of existing laws. Animal Justice Canada Legislative Fund is a federally incorporated not-for-profit dedicated to advocating for the humane treatment of animals."

This is a federally incorporated registered charity which devotes itself to protecting the lives and quality of life of animals here in Ontario and across the rest of the country.

In their words, the report "provides recommendations for improvement that will afford all animals, including marine mammals, farm animals and shelter animals, greater protection against cruelty."

Animal Justice went on to say that they hoped the report would be an important tool in the ongoing process of educating the public and informing positive improvements to animal protection legislation in the province.

The current OSPCA Act, under the government, is simply not adequate. The discussion is often unfairly framed as out-of-control officers versus landowners who are painted as being off their rocker. They aren't bad people; they're good people operating in a crazy system, pitted against each other and scapegoated. By keeping them just out at arm's length, the government is able to keep itself out of the mess when times are bad—simply issuing a budget to keep the group going.

To the government's credit, they have increased that budget, although some would argue the merit of increasing the budget without first fixing the problems unrelated to money that are keeping the organization from succeeding. But that would be beyond the scope of this particular bill before us here in the Legislature today.

I want to quote again: "Allegations of the OSPCA abusing the power granted to it under the act have been publicly made by many landowners' groups."

"For example, during the public hearings regarding Bill 50, a speaker representing one of the landowners' groups raised issue with the fact that where police officers are required to advise a suspect of his or her rights, the OSPCA enforcement officers have no such obligation. The speaker suggested that this allows OSPCA officers to abuse their powers by pressuring landowners who

do not know their rights for permission to enter onto their property in the absence of a warrant.

"Landowners have also made abuse-of-power arguments respecting the warrantless entry provisions of the OSPCA Act. For instance, the same speaker identified above made statements that in their own personal experience, 'out-of-control OSPCA enforcement officers tried to seize all of [their] animals without warrants or proper cause.'"

Again, this is a problem stemming from a lack of effective legislation when it comes to the OSPCA. The lack of an effective legislative framework not only leaves civilians vulnerable to potential abuse by renegade officers, but it also places the good enforcement officers in a needlessly risky situation.

Animal enforcement officers also benefit from a clearer set of rules. It's surely not an easy task for them to seize animals. It's obviously a passionate and stressful situation for all involved. If they have clearer criteria, it has a dual benefit: increased transparency and more public support. By putting the rules out there for all to see and play by, it sheds light on the large grey area that animal enforcement can sometimes operate in, where rulings are left up to on-the-fly personal interpretations. In the current system, the liability is effectively placed on the individual OSPCA enforcement officers, who are forced to make personal judgment calls in a stressful environment, as the government has been unable to provide them with the proper legislative framework to work under to date.

Luckily, there are people here in the province of Ontario who take the rights of animals seriously and work tirelessly to improve the animal care system. I met with several individuals from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and it was clear just how much they care about the well-being of animals in this province and the importance of making well-thought-out changes to improve the framework that oversees the entire matter.

Many people care deeply about the health of animals. They're our companions and friends and, in many cases, a member of our own family. A lot of people are passionate about animal welfare, and a good number of these people could be found right here in the Ontario PC caucus. We stand together, Speaker, in our desire to improve the legislation surrounding animal rights and the enforcement and protection of animals carried out throughout the province of Ontario.

In November 2010, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, Mr. Frank Klees, came to Queen's Park with the intent of closing some of the loopholes in oversight and efficiency that led to the loss of animal life in his community. It was a fine example of an experienced MPP using their position to offer solutions to a problem that impacts residents and the province as a whole. We all benefit from a good idea. As MPPs, we should never let politics get in the way of a good idea. In fairness, I'm sure that some of the members on the government side may say that my description of this motion has a bit of a

bias, considering that the member was a colleague of mine. Instead, let's listen to the non-partisan animal advocates at Animal Justice Canada and their description of the motion. In their report, the registered charity stated: "Mr. Klees tabled a motion in the Legislature calling on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act. Further, Mr. Klees advocated for specific changes to the act in order to ensure greater efficiency of the organization as well as to afford greater protection to animals. However, the motion was rejected by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario."

We want to ensure that landowners can be protected from potential abuses of power and the unnecessary seizure of cherished and beloved animals. We want a clear set of rules so that those who are guilty can be punished for their crimes but those who are innocent will not have to live with the fear of potential prosecution and persecution.

We also want to ensure that enforcement officers can perform their duties safely. Current legislation does not afford them as safe an environment as they can work in with improvements. By putting the decision squarely on the shoulders of individual officers, they take the heat for unpopular decisions. It's not fair to the countless officers who carry out their work with a great degree of respect for both animals and their owners who share in the interest of their care.

We also want to close the loopholes that allow for the unfortunate few officers who, in fact, abuse their power.

Finally, we want true oversight of the area to ensure that problems are actually noticed and fixed quickly.

The government is often found to be chasing its tail in scandal. Transparency and effective oversight end this cycle.

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The goal here isn't just to hold a press conference or to take a picture with a cheque or to move on to the next issue. That's just pretending to solve the problem. That's not what Ontarians want to see. They don't want to see governments hand out hard-earned tax dollars without checking out the problem first. Granted, a lack of funding could be part of the issue, but there are several systematic issues that have long plagued the organization and have led to tragic incidents which involved the loss of animal life.

While we're talking about pets, let's think of the problem this way: If you're trying to pour some water in a bowl for your pet and there's a problem and the bowl starts leaking water, you're not going to solve the problem by continuing to stand there and pour water into the bowl, are you? No, that's just useless, throwing water away, just like throwing money at a problem without first having a plan. Once again, this speaks to the importance of letting evidence form decision-making, instead of coming to a decision ahead of time and tailoring your information to fit that narrative.

As I discussed earlier in my remarks, it's incredibly critical that we always remember the importance of

science when making informed public policy decisions. We have seen this government throw science out the window in the past when it comes to animal welfare and safety in the province of Ontario. This government completely ignored science when it imposed a blanket ban on the possession, breeding, importing and transferring of pit bulls in Ontario. This replaced a system that permitted pit bulls as long as they were muzzled and leashed in public, spayed or neutered, or euthanized if they posed a real threat for attack, or following an attack. Many critics at the time pointed out that the blanket ban would unfairly target pit bulls and not actually solve the problem.

Animal Justice Canada was one of several groups representing both animal rights and owners' rights that expressed criticism of the policy. Commenting on the breed-specific ban last year, Animal Justice stated, "Though intending to reduce the frequency of dog attacks, breed-specific legislation is problematic. It incorrectly attributes violent behavioural traits to breed rather than training and unfairly generalizes across the breed based on the actions of a few when all dogs are capable of biting."

The Toronto Humane Society said that countless pit bulls and Staffordshire terriers were euthanized as a direct result of the ban. The actions of the government led directly to the death of dogs. Again, the number was described as "countless" by the Toronto Humane Society alone.

That said, did the ban at least work? Well, in 2010, a statistical survey conducted by the Toronto Humane Society found that the ban had not significantly reduced the number of dog bites in the province. When evidence takes a back seat to ideology in the form of public policy, the public suffers. But there is a better way, Speaker. If you leave ideology out of the matter and look solely at evidence and good public policy, you achieve real results and actually drive change.

Animal Justice compared Ontario's ideologically driven, ineffectual blanket ban policy with a well-thought-out model that is working wonders in Calgary: "In contrast to the breed-specific legislation in Ontario, Calgary implemented a model in 2006 that uses dog education and stronger enforcement of bylaws to reduce the number of dog-related incidents and injuries. Rather than attributing these incidents to one specific breed of dog, the Calgary model asserts that misbehaviour on the part of any canine is the responsibility of the owner. The model demonstrates that by encouraging more responsible ownership the problem of dog attacks can be greatly reduced."

As we talk more specifically about killer whales, there's only one orca in the entire province of Ontario. It receives daily medical care from a number of physicians and veterinarians. The average Ontarian spends several hours waiting if they want to receive emergency care. In my riding, many residents don't even have a family doctor or even a registered nurse to see.

Bill 80's also much publicized section contains a prohibition of orca possession and breeding: "No person

shall possess or breed an orca in Ontario." The wording is very important here. There's no room; there's no flexibility. The language is very—no pun intended—black and white. This lack of flexibility could potentially have a negative impact on the health of orcas. The lack of flexibility will certainly have negative implications for Ontario's only orca.

In all of Canada, there are only two aquariums that are capable of providing rehabilitative care for injured killer whales. A ban without any ministerial flexibility could consign an injured orca to death unnecessarily. This goes against the very basis of all sensible conservation efforts.

As I mentioned previously, the unintended consequence of the bill would be condemning Ontario's only orca to a lonely end of life. Ironically, the original Toronto Star report that eventually led to the bill before us today actually spoke against the isolation of orcas, which the government is currently looking to enshrine into law. The story, written in mid-2012, stated, "Orca Kiska has been alone since November 2011. It's a practice banned in the US and frowned on by CAZA."

Animal rights activists, trainers, veterinarians and the general public would all agree that it's best for orcas not to be kept alone for the duration of their lives. As the article mentioned, this practice is banned outright in the US. In Ontario, this government is effectively looking to do the exact opposite thing. In the case of Kiska, as the bill is currently written, the government would be sentencing her to a life in solitude.

The ministry noted that Kiska is too old to move to another facility or even to be released into the wild. At this stage of her life, the most humane thing to do is to ensure that she is living comfortably under excellent standards of care. She does get excellent care; everyone is in agreement on this. And what about other orcas who are already in captivity, too old to reproduce and, for one reason or another, cannot be released into the wild? Would it not be more humane to allow these animals to live in the company of Kiska in the largest orca facility?

Rules can and should be strengthened to ensure that top-notch care is received by Kiska and all other marine mammals. However, these rules should actually be to the benefit of animals. As written, this bill would forbid Kiska from ever swimming with a friend for the rest of her life. If passed as is, Bill 80 could very well lead to decades of loneliness for an animal that prefers to be amongst fellow orcas.

As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, most orcas routinely travel with companions. Transient orcas tend to form smaller pods of one to seven whales, while resident orcas form larger pods of between five and 25 whales. Look, Speaker, I believe most Ontarians would support the spirit of the bill, but I also believe that many would not want to pass a bill that would guarantee that Kiska will never see her kind again for the rest of her life.

There has to be a common-sense approach—there simply has to be. Surely, there must be an approach that allows for the spirit of the bill to live on while allowing for the possibility of at least temporary companionship or

emergency rehabilitation of orcas in the future. What happens if an orca washes up on shore after this bill is passed? Do they then say, "You can't provide a home for an orca"? What happens then? I guess maybe that orca is destined for premature death.

This tool should be for specific circumstances only and up to the discretion of the minister of the day and the experts at the ministry. That way, we can ensure that the true spirit of the bill comes through in the legislation instead of harming the health of the only whale in the province and, perhaps, others who may need a rehab stint.

As the official opposition, it's our duty to point out the consequences of any particular bill, whether they are intended or unintended. In addition to concerns over animal welfare, this bill will certainly impact the Niagara Falls region as a whole.

On September 9, 2013, in a letter addressed to Premier Wynne, Niagara Falls Mayor James Diodati expressed the city's support for Marineland. In the mayor's words, "Marineland is a major employer and a successful business that supports Niagara Falls as an iconic, thriving tourism destination."

The Niagara Falls mayor went on to state that they are a leader in marketing the region, as they contribute \$4.5 million annually "to help promote our destination to the world."

Mayor Diodati ended his letter with a plea to the Premier: "I urge you to carefully consider the ramifications of any proposals made to the government in light of the importance of Marineland to Niagara Falls and our region."

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A similar letter was also addressed to the Premier by Niagara Falls Tourism. In their assessment of the situation, Niagara Falls Tourism stated, "The OSPCA has declined to lay any charges and closed its case, and experts from Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums"—that's CAZA—"found 'no evidence of animal abuse' at Marineland and concluded unequivocally that the animals at Marineland are healthy and well cared for."

The letter goes on to express support for enhanced care and treatment of animals, but through the use of well-thought-out legislation. "We all welcome thoughtful and well-considered legislation to enhance and improve the care and treatment of animals. We do not support and cannot support ill-considered, unscientific, unnecessary and thoughtless proposals that will devastate our community. A marine mammal ban imposed by the government of Ontario will force the closure of Marineland."

These are the valid concerns of local leaders and community representatives. This bill will certainly have an impact on their region, and the government needs to be honest about this. If it feels that it is worth losing economic activity in the Niagara Falls area to bring this change forward, will the government help the Niagara region brace for the impact of lower revenue and huge job losses?

That's a question that is on my mind and on the minds of many other people, especially those in this Legislature, and one I hope the government can answer as we move forward. This bill is very much a work in progress, as so few of the eventual changes are spelled out in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's hard to know where to start. Let's start by saying to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex that he should watch a film called *Blackfish*. He should watch the face of that orca mother as her children are being ripped away from her into captivity.

He should think about the reality of an animal that is used to swimming miles and miles—we heard about diving a mile—in a pod of 25 to 30 being kept in a swimming pool for her entire life. That is the fate of Kiska. The answer to the fate of Kiska is not to bring more Kiskas into that fate; the answer is to stop that practice entirely.

In fact, every marine biologist in the world supports this stance. There isn't one who would support what the member is saying. Let me talk about one of them: Jacques Cousteau. How about him? Let's start with him. He said there is as much educational benefit in studying dolphins and whales in captivity as there is in studying humans by observing prisoners in solitary confinement. He said, "No aquarium, no tank ... however spacious it may be, can begin to duplicate the conditions of the sea. And no dolphin" or orca "who inhabits one of those aquariums or one of those marine lands can be considered" in any way in normal circumstances.

Or Ric O'Barry, *The Cove*, another great movie about the killing of dolphins by Japanese whalers: He was up here, actually, and he met with the Attorney General. He said that it's just appalling that the people in power haven't done anything to implement the kinds of basic, elementary laws which exist even in developing or Third World countries to protect animals.

That's what we're dealing with here, not to mention the SLAPP suits against the trainers who worked with the animals, against the Toronto Star, who reported on the trainers who worked with the animals—not to mention the 85,000 signatures I personally delivered to this House, calling upon this government for action.

More later, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Northumberland-Quinte West.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're the voice.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Absolutely. I've been waiting for this moment all my life.

Let me just try make some comments on the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. Speaker, I did listen intently as he was speaking for an hour. I think we should give him another hour, frankly, because I was having a hard time making sense of what he was saying. He was all over the place. I thought at first it was going to be an educational exercise for me, but it failed.

Let me talk about a couple of things he said. He talked about comparing this legislation with what's happening in California, but with more consultation. Well, we are going to have consultations. We're not there yet. The minister did consult with stakeholders. He followed some of the direction from reports.

We're here debating during second reading. I'm sure it will get to committee, and a lot of input from the public and experts.

I find it hard to understand how human beings are able to sit back and, for enjoyment, watch whales like Kiska in a tank. Frankly, it's like being in prison, I would think. I've never been in prison; I don't know what it's like.

Interjection: It's the same thing, I assure you.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm sure it's not easy.

For us, for a sense of some enjoyment, I've taken my kids and grandkids to aquariums, but under those circumstances, I'm not sure that's what we want to see.

Speaker, let's get this legislation beyond this stage of debate. Let's get it to committee and get the consultation process done, and let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm actually very pleased to stand up here and share some comments with regard to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and his remarks on Bill 80, the marine mammals act, because he has done his homework. He actually has met with stakeholders from Niagara region to understand their perspectives, so that the debate in this House could be balanced. That's what we need. We just can't have people ramming legislation down our throats. We need a balanced approach, with thoughtful ideas coming forward, so that the legislation that we uphold makes sense across the board for all three parties.

I find it interesting, because I did appreciate the marine biology lesson that you set off sharing with us at the beginning of your debate, but I really appreciated it specifically when the member spoke of the loss of oversight that has happened over the last decade with regard to how the OSPCA is conducting itself. You shared the example of the ringworm episode in Newmarket as a perfect example of how things have gotten out of hand.

We need a government that casts oversight on all agencies, so that we know that the welfare of animals is being upheld properly. There are wonderful organizations, such as Farm and Food Care Ontario, that are advocates to do just that. I would encourage all parties in this House to utilize qualified organizations, like Farm and Food Care Ontario, to truly understand, embrace and move forward on legislation with regard to animal welfare that makes sense.

Lastly, to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex: You mentioned that we stand together as a caucus, and that we do. We stand together as a caucus when it comes to upholding standards that should be addressed in this House, as opposed to unbalanced approaches.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's an honour to stand in the House and make comments after my friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex. I don't know Kiska or any other killer whales. I have met whales in the wild.

Let me give you a picture, Speaker: myself, a buddy and my father-in-law, out in a small boat, not far off the south coast of Newfoundland. We're jigging for codfish on a really foggy day. You look around and you don't see much but fog, and all of a sudden—whoosh—this sperm whale breaches about 20 feet from your boat. The whale is a lot bigger than your boat, so you can imagine what may have happened if that whale would have been any closer.

I'll tell you another story. We know whales are really intelligent creatures, as are porpoises and dolphins—

Interjection: Manatees.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I don't know about manatees so much.

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But my dad, one time, was out with a buddy off the south coast, and they were going to pick up their cod nets. They had their lines strung out. Well, they came across a dolphin that was all wrapped up in the net. Now, my dad's buddy wanted to shoot it, cut off its tail fin and put it up over a door—like a horseshoe over a door—for good luck. My dad wouldn't let him. My dad forced him to take the time, my dad unwrapped the dolphin from the net, saved him, patted him on the nose. The dolphin swam out about 50 yards or so, my dad said, came up on his tail fin and came in three times, nattering away as if to say, "Thank you."

When you see something like that—no, I didn't see that; my dad related the story to me—but when you see a whale breach, or you see something like that on the tail coming in saying "Thanks," it makes you think about creatures in the wild versus creatures in a pen some place. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex for his reply.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I'd like to thank the members for their contributions, the members from Parkdale-High Park, Northumberland-Quinte West, Huron-Bruce and Windsor-Tecumseh.

Since it was mentioned earlier about Marineland, again, I want to reiterate the fact that there were no charges. Their first priority is in fact the health and welfare of its mammals and other animals. Without that health and welfare of animals and so on, they wouldn't be in business. Of course they support very much clear principles and coherent legislation which in fact ensures the proper care and treatment of all animals. That's very, very important.

The member from Parkdale-High Park is sensationalizing this element if it pertains specifically to Marineland. I don't agree with that at all. There are activists out there, and there may be in fact activists who would seek the demise of any zoos. I don't know if she has a zoo in her area or not. They would spell the demise of any other

aquariums; perhaps even Ripley's would be the next thing.

Where does it stop? This is what I call the "camel theory," Mr. Speaker, where the camel is cold outside its camel master's tent and he puts his nose inside and says, "Let me just get my nose in here so I can be warm." And the next thing you know the head and then the front hoofs—next thing the entire camel is in there. Where's it going to stop? Is it going to stop with orcas? Is it going to stop with other types of whales, with dolphins? Could it be the closure? I don't know.

Some of the activists out there are very much against this, where people can come and grow—and of course it's been proven that Marineland is a huge contributor to the economic well-being of Niagara Falls as well. So I stand firm, and we stand strong as a caucus. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to this bill.

We remember back in 2012 when the first articles—excellent articles—appeared in the Star, written by Linda Dibel and Liam Casey. They were articles that outlined the condition of animals at Marineland. And it wasn't something they invented. They're journalists, and they're good ones. It's something that they heard from the workers at Marineland, the young people who were just earning over minimum wage there; people like Christine Santos, Jim Hammond and Phil Demers, who were the trainers, who loved the animals and took care of them. Absolutely, they took care of them and absolutely, they loved them. And that's why they came forward to the Star.

The sad reality that came from all of that is that all those three were fired. I'm going to talk about anti-SLAPP legislation in a minute—which was originally our bill, Mr. Speaker; it was originally the New Democratic Party bill that brought in anti-strategic lawsuits against public participation—anti-SLAPP—defamation suits. This is a classic defamation suit that is happening against not only Christine Santos, Jim Hammond and Phil Demers, who were all workers who needed those jobs, who did those jobs well and who loved those animals, but also the Toronto Star, \$7 million; the Georgia Straight, Digital Journal and lots and lots of other, smaller organs of communication that simply wanted to have a discussion about how to keep marine mammals—if you're going to keep them at all—in captivity, and how this perhaps wasn't the way.

So I want to dedicate my comments to them. And I also want to dedicate them to people like Carly Ferguson.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker; I forgot. I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the lead. I forgot to say that right up front. Can I ask—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the House. The member for Parkdale–High Park is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to stand down

the lead speech on this bill for the New Democrats. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I want to dedicate my comments to them and also to groups like Ontario Captive Animal Watch; Carly Ferguson here, OSPCA-trained, sitting; and Dr. Gitte Fenger, a veterinarian here; and all the veterinarians, including the veterinary association itself, which is now, by the way, investigating the veterinarians who were part of this at Marineland and has been for a number of years.

The other sad reality is that Smooshi—we all remember Smooshi. Remember Larry? Remember Kiska from those stories? They were brought so vividly home to us with those pictures. Three years after those Star investigative pieces, those animals are still in the same conditions. They're still in the same place. Really, nothing much has changed. The water is cleaner. The tanks are cleaned a little bit more often. But really, nothing much has changed.

You all heard me quote from Jacques Yves Cousteau. You heard me quote from Ric O'Barry, the narrator in *The Cove*. You heard me talk about Blackfish, that movie that outlined so well the condition in SeaWorld of orcas, where in the off-season they're kept in sheds—in sheds. Imagine this creature that swims for miles, that dives, kept in a shed. Again, I go back to that image: Imagine you being kept in a bathtub in solitary confinement. That's what it's like.

Is Kiska getting medical attention? Oh, yes, she is, because she desperately needs it; no animal like her can live in those conditions. She is heavily medicated. That's the simple reality, and so would you be if you lived in those conditions. She has lost five of her offspring. Five have died, one after the other after the other. Surely this calls for action, and that's what we hope we're getting.

There are some concerns, however, because yes, orcas—we think Free Willy. But there's also dolphins there. There's also belugas there. In fact, we think there are over 40 belugas there, and they're breeding. Why would this legislation only look at orcas and not look at belugas and not look at dolphins, which, again, marine mammal experts have called for legislation around?

But I'm hopeful—I live in hope; otherwise I wouldn't do this job—that the ministry, through their regulations, which are going to be forthcoming, and also through their expert panel, will actually come back with other regulations and other asks. I suspect they will. I hope it's done quickly for Kiska's sake and for all animals' sake—not just at Marineland, of course, but everywhere because that's what we're talking about here.

I want to talk about those young trainers too, because this is a situation that hasn't only hurt those with fins; it has also hurt those with two legs. Those trainers are still, as I say, fighting those lawsuits just for doing their jobs.

I'm going to read you some of the issues that have been raised around this bill. I was happy to hear that Zoocheck—we heard one of the members talk about Animal Justice; I'm going to be talking about them as

well—and other organizations are actually part of that expert panel. I was happy to hear that.

I already talked about the breeding of other cetaceans and other marine mammals and how that should also be captured with this bill. The Rosen report recommended additional regulations for facilities acquiring new wild-born animals, but Ontario has not acted on that recommendation. I don't see it here. What do I mean by that? That means that Ontario can still allow whales and dolphins brutally captured from the wild to be brought into the province. Greenland could still get belugas and dolphins, capture them from Russia.

They could even purchase dolphins from the dolphin fishery in Japan that The Cove is based on. My goodness, if you never want to sleep again and have nightmares forever, watch The Cove; it's awful.

Of course, we've talked about Kiska and what is going to happen to her. That's a primary concern: How are we going to deal with her? So I hope the government gives itself some powers to be able to deal with that.

Talking about powers, there are concerns, of course. I heard what the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex said about the OSPCA. By the way, we, in the New Democratic Party, supported Frank Klees's bill to have oversight over the OSPCA; we absolutely think it should. It is a private charity and, as such, as a private charity, it does not have to disclose its books and does not have to have its practices open and transparent.

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I hope by giving this extra \$5 million a year to them, the government will demand some accountability also—demand them to open their books, demand to look at their practices and to have a say about those practices, because this is significant taxpayers' money now that's going into the OSPCA.

The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex was absolutely right. There have been problems with the OSPCA in the past. We think about—it was 100 dogs euthanized because they had ringworm, a treatable condition. It was only the outcry from the member himself in Newmarket–Aurora, and from residents around there, who said, "Enough" that made them stop. So just giving money to them isn't going to confirm that something will be done about marine mammals either, unless there is oversight.

There is no reason that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services shouldn't be that ministry to have that oversight; somebody has to. The Ombudsman would be good. We like the Ombudsman and what he does. But somebody should have oversight over what the OSPCA does and what they don't do.

Also, of course, when they open their books as a private charity, that brings up other concerns, and the concerns are very clear. The concerns are those of any private charity who then we call upon to enforce rules, regulations or laws, and that is: Who are they getting their money from? Who are they getting their money from? Rumour has it, although, again, we don't know for

sure, that Marineland is one of the major contributors to the OSPCA.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, if that is the case—or any other facility, for that matter. We could single out any roadside zoo anywhere and ask: If this body, the OSPCA, is supposed to be auditing and enforcing rules over a facility that donates to them, is this not a conflict of interest?

Again, I go back to the ministry. The OSPCA, in all of its capacity, needs oversight. We have no one else to turn to, so we have to turn to them. But let's make sure that the job is done well. I don't fault the individual enforcement officers there. I believe they have the best interests of animals at heart, but mistakes are made. Clearly mistakes were made with the 100 dogs that were euthanized, so let's have some oversight.

Talking about oversight, here's the most frightening thing of all. This is so shocking that I would ask almost for a moment of silence, at least inhale before I say this, because in Ontario you need a licence for a cat, you need a licence for a dog, but you don't need a licence for an orca or a tiger. Think about it. If I had the wherewithal, I could import a tiger and keep it in my backyard. By the way, people are doing just about that with roadside zoos, and we've had some terrific occurrences because of that. Members might remember the attack by a tiger from a roadside zoo, because there are no laws governing them. There's no licensing governing them. This is appalling. This is ridiculous. This is dangerous, and this is the case here.

I hope that one of the regulations that the ministry looks at with their expert committee, and I know this goes beyond the scope of aquariums, is to look at bringing in—a couple of backbench Liberals, David Zimmer being one in the day, now a minister, brought in bills to this effect, which is that we need licensing for those who will have exotics and marine mammals. We need licensing for this. We have had enough bad experiences in the province. It's ridiculous we don't have this done; nothing much is going to change until we do.

Here's a situation that needs to be remedied. Maybe this is the place to do it. I don't know. Maybe it's beyond the scope of the bill, but it's certainly an amendment that we, as New Democrats, will look at and will want to see some movement on, because, my goodness, just because you have a lot of money, you shouldn't be able to get a whale and keep it in a bathtub. Got it, right? You shouldn't be able to get a lion and keep it in your backyard, either.

What else should we say? Animal Justice Canada has done some phenomenal work, and I want to give them a shout-out, as well as the Star and others who did some great investigative journalism. They made a series of recommendations about the OSPCA and about, really, animal welfare generally. I think they're important to just go over. It's interesting that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex didn't mention the fact that they would like to see things change at Marineland too.

They also want to see things change at the OSPCA. They want to see the separation of shelter and investiga-

tive mandates. Again, that just makes some sense. They want to establish—and I've talked about this before— independent oversight of the OSPCA. What else do they want to do? They want to amend the OSPCA Act to authorize preventive medical care during redemption periods. This means that when they take the animals in from wherever, when they're seizing animals, they have to look after them and that they don't charge back to the people whose animals they seized if, again, there was no fault of that—it was filed, there was no fault. That they establish minimum standards of care for their own shelters—think about it: We ask of the OSPCA that they establish minimum standards of care for their own shelters. Again, I go back to the ringworm and the hundred dogs euthanized. Establish minimum standards of care: That seems to be kind of a no-brainer—and, of course, the regulatory oversight of zoos and aquariums, which I think needs some policy changes here. Hopefully, that's going to be happening.

So that was Animal Justice, a wonderful group of folks, many lawyers among them. I'll give you another example, which is actually quite startling. I'm going up to a primate sanctuary next month to visit, among other primates, the Ikea monkey—remember the Ikea monkey?—who was seized, with good reason, from its owner. That same owner has gone out and gotten two more monkeys—two more monkeys, the same owner, again. I call upon the ministry, I call upon the minister, let's look at the licensing and how it works for exotics, primates being among them. You shouldn't be able to have a monkey without a licence. Come on. You probably shouldn't be able to have a monkey at all, I think. Hey, maybe they're fine someplace as somebody's pet, but for heaven's sake, let's have some oversight, have some regulatory body looking at them.

I mentioned off the top that never before in my experience of this House has a petition garnered so much support as the petition for changes at Marineland specifically, growing out of the Star's investigative report and the good work of the trainers who worked there and came forth; 85,000 signatures through change.org were delivered to the then Premier of the day, Dalton McGuinty. Here's the sad reality, Mr. Speaker: We're still talking about it. It's three years later. It's 2015.

I certainly hope for speedy passage of this bill. I certainly hope that the regulations they bring forward add immensely to the scope of this bill, because it needs to happen. Ultimately, when we really think about it, what do we really want? We really want the best for the animals that are still there as well. We want what's best for them. That may mean a number of things. I'm not the expert; we need to hear from the experts. We need to see some action.

Back in the days when I was in seminary, as part of our graduation from seminary, we had to do a year-long stint in some facility, some institution—a pastoral stint. I ended up doing mine in a hospital, but SickKids was one of them. I knew in my heart of hearts that I couldn't do that. I could not be the chaplain at SickKids. I just didn't

have the wherewithal. I'll freely admit it took more than I have in terms of courage to deal with children who are suffering. Maybe children who are suffering I could have dealt with, but children who are being abused and caused to suffer by someone who has power over them, I knew I could not deal with, and I certainly couldn't be forgiving and loving to the abuser. It's beyond me.

What we all can do as legislators is stand up for the vulnerable and the marginalized in this place, which I've tried to do, lo, these almost nine years later in a variety of contexts.

Here is one of those contexts. I think we all know—studies show—the early signs of psychopathy or sociopathy in children are when they hurt animals. We know this. We know that we have power over animals. We know this. We are more powerful than they are in many ways. It is incumbent upon us to watch what we do, to monitor our behaviour and the behaviour of other animals to look after that which we have been gifted with. It's that simple. What we're calling for here—I was hoping we were all of one accord. I'm not so sure after the comments from the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex, but I live in hope.

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I think that, from the government side and certainly from our side, we want to move forward to see something happen. Over here in the New Democratic Party, we want to have it happen a little faster, like maybe three years ago, but we'll work with what we've got. We're talking about power over the vulnerable.

Here, again, is something where I admit I don't have the wherewithal. I don't want to go into those places and take pictures. I don't want to measure the water quality. I don't want to be the OSPCA officer who has to confront abuse when I see it. I don't want to do that. I would never sleep again if I had to do that as a job. I don't have what it takes. But it is incumbent upon me and, I would argue, all of us who have the wherewithal to stand in this place, in a Legislature—we don't have to go out and do the dirty work. We don't have to be called upon to be brave and courageous like others are—and I'm looking at two of them sitting here. All we have to do is the right thing with policy, and here's our chance to do it. All we really have to do is to say something so obvious that I think it's a no-brainer; anybody could agree to ban the importation of any more orcas to live as Kiska has to live, to stop that from happening again—that's what this bill says—and to get together an expert panel to look at other regulations that are needed. And other regulations are needed. As I go back, hark, again: You need a licence for a dog or a cat. You don't need a licence for a lion, a tiger or a whale. How ridiculous is that?

The time has come, Mr. Speaker, to act—finally; my goodness, years later. Please, let's get it right. Please, let's listen to all the voices. Let's listen—absolutely; I have no objection—to the people of Niagara Falls, to the people at Marineland. But let's also listen to those people who have made it their lifelong duty to look after animals in captivity—people like Zoocheck, a wonderful

organization; people like Animal Justice, another wonderful organization; people like Ontario Captive Animal Watch; and the veterinarian association. Let's listen to them too. Let's listen to all the voices.

Let's listen to the Rosen report and the recommendations therein, because they're good ones, and let's now finally put them into place, quickly—because I wish I could say time is running out for Kiska, but it's not. She could live another 40 years in solitary confinement, in a bathtub.

We've got to do something better. We can do something better. It's incumbent upon us to do something better. Let's do something better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to speak to this very important bill. I want to start out by thanking the member opposite for her passionate support of the reason behind Bill 80.

Animal welfare is a key priority for our government. As has been talked about, marine animals are complex, diverse and magnificent creatures with unique needs that require the right standards of care. That's really why Bill 80, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, is being introduced. It would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario.

Orcas are extremely complex and exceptionally large animals. As we've come to know the science better, it became clear to us that our government needed to enact a ban on the breeding and acquisition of orcas in Ontario. Our government feels strongly that it's difficult to develop a suitable habitat for an animal of that magnitude. That's why we made the decision to prohibit the future acquisition and breeding of orcas in Ontario.

Additionally, the bill would create a framework to establish animal welfare committees, as recommended in Dr. Rosen's report. These committees would ensure planning, protection and oversight for the animals' care—animal care plans, if you will—and access to veterinarians with expertise in marine animals, and enhanced record-keeping.

Our government is putting in place the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity in Canada. Our government remains committed to the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine animals in captivity because that's what Ontarians expect, that's what these animals deserve and that's what our government is committed to doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It's great to rise and have a comment on the speech delivered by the member from Parkdale—High Park. I enjoy listening to her speak on occasion, because she has such passion on every issue that comes forward.

I'd just like her to maybe ferret out more of a direction with regard to how you talk about licensing for cats and dogs but not for lions, tigers and bears. The fact is that

licensing for cats and dogs is just filling out a form and paying a fee. It has nothing to do with actually knowing how to properly care for a cat or dog. I don't know. I get what you're saying, but maybe tweak it a little more, to have a better understanding during the debate.

I think the Windsor—Tecumseh member, Percy, talked about the whales he met while out fishing. They're a magnificent animal to see out in the wild. I was fortunate enough, before I got into politics, to have a trip to Maui, in February, and that is the time when the whales are in the area of Hawaii. We had a great boat cruise. The size and the majesty of the creatures—there were two of them playing and they came right under our boat. I honestly thought, if they actually lifted it out of the water, that our boat would have been capsized. I was like, "Holy smokes."

But it's interesting to debate this. Like I said, our party is definitely taking a close look at this legislation and taking a careful, cautious approach to ensure that it's done right.

I'm glad our critic had the hour to speak. I would have liked to hear you talk for an hour, but you stepped down to have 20 minutes. Maybe we'll get you back, on further readings, or comments and questions.

Thanks very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure and a privilege to stand up on behalf of the people in Algoma-Manitoulin. I must admit, I didn't particularly know where I stood on this issue, because although there may be a lot of people who care about it across Algoma-Manitoulin, it's not something that I've actually experienced throughout the riding. But having said that, sometimes you have to refer back and you have to go back to your strengths.

As a father, what did you do when you were from northern Ontario? You came down to Marineland. You went out and visited the orcas; you went out and visited the whales; and you went out to the facilities where these beautiful creatures were swimming in their environment. It reflected a couple of questions that my kids would ask me: "Where are they going after we leave, Dad?" So it made me think some more.

Listening to what the member from Parkdale—High Park said—sometimes you have to stand up for the most vulnerable. It really clicked in to me. It just jogged something in my mind.

Again, as a father, when you're back home and you're talking to your kids—would we accept walking by the yard of somebody who has a dog, on about a two-foot chain, running around in a circle? What would I say to my kids there? It makes you think. This makes you think.

We have a responsibility here as legislators as to—if you don't have a position and you don't know what to feel, it's your job to go out and find people who are passionate about the issue, to find out what it means to them.

I do want to add that the powers of an animal are great. I need to introduce you to my dog, Abby, at home.

She does have control over me, and she does make me do certain things, and I do wonderful tricks with her. But she's part of my family. She's a family member. That's the difference.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm happy to rise in my place today on behalf of my constituents in Burlington and talk about this very important piece of legislation. I, too, want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park, who is an outstanding advocate. I always enjoy listening to you. We may not always agree, but I'm absolutely delighted to have you as a colleague, and I love to watch your passion for issues. It really reminds me of why I'm here, so thank you for your comments today.

Of course, my other colleagues from Cambridge, Elgin, Algoma–Manitoulin—the member from Algoma was talking about his dog, and I just had to get a word in about my dog, Lola, who's a friend, so, I mean, one dog to another, right? Lola has been my friend for 12 years and is part of my family too. But you're quite right: These are members of our family.

Of course, marine mammals are a completely different kettle of fish. As animal lovers, I know we all share an interest and concern in protecting our most vulnerable, and, of course, marine mammals are part of that conversation. The member for Parkdale–High Park outlined the situation with the whale at Marineland. That's why we're all here to discuss this very important issue, to see where we agree to come to some kinds of conclusions about what we want to do in this regard.

I think the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, Bill 80, is an important step forward in this regard. I hope it's going to have all-party support. What I'm hearing from the members today is an interest and concern that's common. I'm particularly pleased to see the technical advisory group that's going to be established, and the opportunity for further consultation through the Environmental Registry. All of our constituents will have that opportunity, and I know they will have something to say. Certainly the people in Burlington care deeply about marine animals. Niagara Falls is not far away from my riding, and many of them like to visit. I know they care deeply about the animals and the orcas that are there.

The member from Windsor was talking earlier about orcas in Newfoundland. I saw them there as well. They are absolutely magnificent creatures.

My time is up. I could talk longer, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately my time has run out. So thank you, colleagues, for the debate today. I look forward to further conversation. And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You're welcome.

We now return to the member for Parkdale–High Park for her two-minute reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to everyone who weighed in on this debate.

To the person who talked about the animal welfare committees, that may be good, but they have to be autonomous. There was an animal welfare committee at Marineland. It was the trainers who loved and looked after the animals. They spoke out. They got fired and they're being sued. They were an animal welfare committee. We can't have the same thing repeat itself. We need something that's autonomous, that isn't under the control of the owner, obviously.

Licensing—the member talked about that. Of course it's only a first step. It's just a piece of paper, but at least it demands interaction with some body. It's just the first step; oversight and enforcement are clearly the next two.

Whales in the wild—of course, that's where we should see whales. If you want to see a whale, go see it in the wild. You don't see a whale in a swimming pool; you see the mere shadow of what could have been a whale. You see a whale suffering. As you heard Jacques Cousteau say, it's like trying to get to know humans by watching a prisoner in solitary confinement.

And children? Children need to get information about marine mammals. You can do it on wonderful 3D film technology now if you can't get into the wild to do it.

I also have a dog, Victoria. I have to give her a shout-out. She has her own Facebook page. You're all invited to join it. Of course, I ring with ending the breed-specific legislation, because my dog would be covered by it if she weren't an English bull terrier. She, I'd like to say, has nothing in common with Don Cherry's dog, though. She is a social democrat bull terrier.

Just finally, I want to say that if we go out of this place with one thought, we have to walk out of this place with this thought: Remember Kiska. Let's free Kiska. Let's not forget Kiska. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2015.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
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of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative
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Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

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Wednesday 1 April 2015

Mercredi 1^{er} avril 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. As I understand it, this bill, if passed, contains measures that will enact healthy menu choices, amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and enact the Electronic Cigarettes Act. This is an important bill, as it will impact so many areas of people's lives, which my caucus and I believe will be for the better.

I want to look at schedule 2 of the bill, which addresses the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Adults have the ability to choose for themselves what vices they partake of; however, we have seen an alarming trend toward flavoured tobacco and its packaging and promotion. I have seen for myself tobacco products that have been branded and packaged to resemble candy more than tobacco. As a parent and grandparent, I find this practice very disturbing. Tobacco companies are not playing fair with our children. It has been a long, uphill battle to educate people on the harmful effects of smoking. While we felt we were making progress by raising awareness, tobacco companies were one step ahead and already lining up their next generation of customers.

Moreover, tobacco companies felt that pretty packaging wasn't sufficient and started promotional campaigns to make their product even more appealing. So I'm happy to see this government, at the urging of the NDP critic,

take action on this by including a provision that prohibits the sale of tobacco products with promotional items. They have expressed their intent to ensure that any promotional product must, at a minimum, be sold at the cost of manufacturing.

The hidden reality of this schedule is that once again the government has empowered itself with tremendous leeway over which flavoured products will be banned. My offices have received emails from constituents who are asking for the ban on menthol cigarettes to be lifted. The government has flipped, or rather flopped, on this issue by offering a two-year exemption on the ban against menthol cigarettes, which I suggest will provide tobacco companies with a two-year window to figure out new and creative ways of targeting Ontario's young people.

All the research suggests that menthol cigarettes could be worse for health than regular tobacco, with studies linking them to even more severe lung problems. It was further reported that menthol smokers report more trips to the emergency room than non-menthol smokers, were hospitalized more frequently for worsening of their lung disease, and had 29% higher risk of being hospitalized. Other studies cite that young menthol smokers consume double the tobacco than those smoking conventional cigarettes.

Speaker, these are very worrisome numbers, and the consequences of smoking menthol cigarettes seem to be greater. The facts are clear: Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and illness in Ontario. According to the Ontario Lung Association, there are approximately 13,000 tobacco-related deaths every year in Ontario—that's 36 deaths per day. They also cite that tobacco-related diseases cost the Ontario economy at least \$1.6 billion in health care annually, resulting in more than \$4.4 billion in productivity losses, and account for at least 500,000 hospital stays each year.

Tobacco use and the exposure to second-hand smoke is also linked to serious damage in children including asthma attacks, alterations in lung development and chronic middle ear disease. So the facts show us that we have an uphill battle to help educate our children about the dangers of smoking or chewing tobacco, and I am eager to see some real movement on this issue.

Speaker, the fact of this matter is that youth are impressionable. They have always been and always will be. To dismiss this phenomenon about teenagers would simply be naive. However, it is very concerning that there are currently no age restrictions for purchasing e-cigarettes nor are there restrictions on the marketing and promotion of them, of which the tobacco industry has taken

full advantage. In fact, since the introduction of electronic cigarettes and vapour, Ontario's youth have been at the core of the marketing of these products. In 2103 alone, 15% of Ontario youth said they have used e-cigarettes.

Not only are e-cigarettes and vapour attractive to youth, they are falsely portrayed as safe, nicotine-free and an effective smoking cessation aid. However, these beliefs couldn't be further from the truth.

Lacking regulation both provincially and federally, e-cigarettes and vapour products are not subject to quality and manufacturing standards set forth under the Canada Food and Drugs Act. Just as conventional cigarettes are subject to consumer safety standards, vapour and e-cigarette products should be as well, because in actuality not all consumers of these products know what they are inhaling and what they are taking in.

Furthermore, this lack of oversight in ingredient disclosure and labeling sets a dangerous precedent. A long-held falsehood about e-cigarettes is that they are nicotine-free, which in conventional cigarettes is what makes cigarettes so addictive. While nicotine cannot technically be sold or marketed in Canada—the fact of the matter is that they are readily available on the Internet.

Additionally, studies have shown that the labeling of these products is misguided. In many cases there have been findings of nicotine in products that are labeled as nicotine-free. Not only is this a questionable business practice, but it is also dangerous. These products are perceived as safe and as an alternative to smoking, or even the means to quit smoking altogether. Because of this practice, a relatively new one, more and more studies are coming forth to disprove this belief. In fact, to this day there is no strong evidence to suggest that these products curb smoking at all.

Lastly, Speaker, on smoking, I would just want to note that while I respect an adult to make their own choices, I do want to remind everyone that we are all role models for the children in our communities. The more attractive we make poor health choices appear, the more likely they are to emulate us.

That's the part of smoking that I think is really important. Health issues are complex: From food to exercise to what we use as—like smoking or drinking. But smoking, in particular, has devastating effects on people's health, and the next generations that's up and coming needs to be educated about the new products that are coming onto the market. When we talk about the flavoured cigarettes, they're out there right now. Youth think they're the in thing to do; it's cool.

0910

I mentioned before in the House that I had met with the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation and how their representative had a lip gloss container and it was empty. It was the actual same size as the flavoured cigarette. It looked like candy and it was all designed and colourful. If my daughter or my son had that flavoured cigarette in their backpack, I would think they were wearing lip gloss. I wouldn't have a clue that might be an e-cigarette. Parents also have to be up to date on what products are

out there when it comes to smoking, when their children are at risk.

The other piece I want to talk about is the healthy food act part of it, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I might be able to talk about this in my supplementary a little further. There are many people in my riding who contact my office, and I meet every day, who are underemployed. They have precarious employment. They're working for minimum wage and they are just scraping by. Oftentimes they're just concerned about food security and how to make healthy choices every day in their diet. Just the issue of affordability of everyday food—when people go out to eat, that's a privilege. Not everyone has that room in their budget to go out and have a dinner at a restaurant. I do applaud the fact that when people are going out to eat in restaurants, we're going to have menu labelling and there's going to be awareness and education so people can make healthier choices. But we forget that for the people who are working who can't even squeeze a night out in a restaurant out of their budget, that food security is real every day for them.

I'm happy to see that this bill has finally come forward. I know that our health critic from Nickel Belt has been working very hard, and so thank you to the government for recognizing the work that's been done on this and bringing it forward and working together with all groups to try to make this a good bill. I hope that when we hear more debate, I look forward to this bill being passed when it comes to that time. That the real work, again, will be done in committee to strengthen this bill—and particularly the smoking section would be a great step forward, to see that happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the member from London—Fanshawe. I agree with you: This is basically a non-partisan issue. We need to get this bill passed.

We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults. In my former occupation as a kindergarten teacher, quite often you would see children who were coming in who were already overweight and physically not able to keep up with the others in physical education classes.

A healthy start is better for our kids and it's better for our health care system. The healthier our kids are, the less likely they are to develop a chronic disease later in life. Diabetes is increasing very quickly. Diabetes is becoming more prevalent, especially in young children, and I think this bill is very important to help curb that. That's why the Ontario government constructed the Healthy Kids Panel. They provided us with invaluable advice and we are moving forward on many of the panel's recommendations, including around healthy eating choices for our kids.

In kindergarten, we checked the children's lunch boxes and encouraged them to eat the fruits and vegetables and healthy choices in their lunches before they ate the Oreo cookie.

In order for our parents and children to make healthy choices, though, they need to be informed about the kind

of food they are eating. The Ontario government has re-introduced legislation which will make it easier for families to make informed and healthy food choices and give them the right information in the right place at the right time. These initiatives build on the steps we have taken to give our kids a healthy start, which will include new investments in breastfeeding supports and additional investments in the Ontario Student Nutrition Program. I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I support this bill because it is aimed at improving people's health, and the most important part is probably aimed at improving children's health. We have a situation—especially on the smoking side with flavoured cigarettes—where that campaign is pretty clearly aimed at children and trying to introduce them or entice them into the habit of smoking with these candy-flavoured e-cigarettes. I've seen the packaging—the Heart and Stroke people were into my office and explained to me the risks and dangers of this. The packaging makes it look like candy. It's not aimed at adults who smoke.

Adults who smoke are most likely going to smoke cigarettes—menthol-flavoured, perhaps, which has been around for 70 years—or even e-cigarettes, which I understand do help some people wean themselves from the habit of smoking regular cigarettes. So we need to ban flavoured tobacco e-cigarettes because they are a risk in encouraging children to smoke, which is a terrible habit that can be a lifelong addiction, and that does great damage to people's health for all the reasons that are pretty well known.

Now, one of the side effects of the regulations in this bill is that by increasing more regulations for e-cigarettes and even banning the flavoured ones, it's going to drive people to the illegal cigarette market, which is run by the natives of Ontario, and that is criminal. That is against the law. It's a contraband product, and as we make it more and more difficult for people to buy cigarette products off the store shelves, we drive them to the illegal, contraband, native Indian market of illegal cigarettes, where there is absolutely no control: We have no idea what kind of products are going into the cigarettes, and of course there's no tax for the government either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and Happy Pink Shirt Day today.

I'm pleased to be able to stand in my place and comment on G45. I always say, when I stand up to speak to this bill, that the "G" really stands for Gélinas. France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt, has presented this House with 11 bills over the past six years dealing with menu labelling and restrictions on tobacco. It really is a team effort, Speaker, as has been mentioned: It will take all of us to improve this legislation and pass it into law.

I have good friends in Kentucky. One of my buddies down there smokes cigars. There was a crackdown in Kentucky, and he couldn't get the flavoured tobacco he

used to smoke. He called me up and was looking for it up here. Well, I couldn't find it up here for him either. He had to settle for some Cubans that he couldn't get down in Kentucky.

I mention my buddy—he lives just outside of Fort Knox, in a town called Vine Grove, and owns a golf course there, Lincoln Trail. His brother and his sister-in-law don't smoke cigars, but they chew tobacco. I always got a kick out of that, because they have these paper cups with paper towels in them, and they look like they're taking a sip, but they're just spitting the tobacco juice into the cup.

Once—I guess it was in grade 9 in New Brunswick, grade 9 or 10—somebody slipped me a little piece of chewing tobacco. The teacher said, "Hatfield, what are you doing? What are you eating?" So I swallowed it, and I've never touched it since. If you've ever swallowed chewing tobacco, Speaker, you'll know what I'm talking about. It was a good thing it was science lab and there was a sink there, but I'll tell you, I'll never try that stuff again. I don't smoke, and I don't encourage people to smoke or to chew tobacco.

And happy Pink Shirt Day, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister for Children and Youth Services and women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: If I may just indulge for one minute and say it could also be Pink Skirt Day. I would say to my wonderful colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh: Pink Skirt Day or Pink Scarf Day, I think, can work well with Pink Shirt Day. It's all for a good cause.

Speaker, I'm pretty excited about this bill, Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, probably for three reasons.

First, I am the Minister of Children and Youth Services, so I'm always interested in and supportive of anything that helps support kids and youth make healthier choices and have healthier outcomes in their lives.

Secondly, I am a mom of two kids. They're teenagers now, so, since I've been in the Legislature for almost four years, I have to adjust my thinking. I don't have young kids anymore; I have teenagers. Nevertheless, I look at many things through the eyes of my kids, and I think this bill really speaks to what I feel is important as a mother. I think we all want the same thing as parents and caregivers: to see our kids make healthier choices.

0920

The third reason I'm excited about this bill is because I sense there is agreement amongst all the parties that this is the right thing to do. Perhaps some things need to be looked at in further detail in regulation. However, I think it's a great bill, and I'm sensing a lot of support around the House for that, so that's excellent.

Whether we're talking about tobacco products—and I think the bill speaks to the research there, and there's new research particularly on the menthol piece, which is why we're proposing to include it in the ban—the e-cigarettes element of it or the menu labelling, I think it's all good, Speaker. I'm absolutely thrilled that there seems to be consensus and support across the board.

Thank you, and happy Pink Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London—Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member from Barrie mentioned child obesity, and that is something that is on the rise. Our lifestyles have changed over hundreds and thousands of years. The lifestyle challenge that we're facing today is processed food. People eat processed food every day in their diet. Some people eat it because they are in a hurry; they're busy, busy people. Some people don't have the time to create those healthy meals. That does lead to problems.

It leads to patterns of behaviour; again we're influencing and showing our children our eating patterns, so it's not a surprise that our children today are facing issues of weight. They're also on the computer more—social media—they're also playing video games, and they're not as active. So we do have to make a concerted effort in our school systems and at home.

Even when we're parking our cars—when we talk about exercise is where I'm going. When you're going to the store with your child, to the grocery store, don't complain about the parking spot that isn't close to the store. Just park in the back. Park in the back and then just walk to the grocery store or wherever you're going to do your shopping. Make it part of something you do every day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Changing your own behaviour will maybe reflect on your peers and even your colleagues here in the House and your children.

There's one thing I saw in the news today, Speaker, that there are communities taking a lot of initiative when it comes to healthy food choices.

Oh gosh, I'm out of time. Maybe I'll talk to that later in another comments and questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to see you this morning and to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. This bill has three schedules.

Maybe I'll start with schedule 2, which is the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. "The sale of promotional items together with tobacco products is prohibited." I don't have a problem with that. "The sale of flavoured tobacco products is prohibited..." As other members have talked about, these flavoured tobacco products are used to entice our youth to smoke and are used as a gateway product to get them hooked on smoking, and then, of course, they end up with an addiction to it. So I don't have a problem with that.

I did meet with the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association, and certainly tobacco products are a big part of their business. As long as they're legal, they want to look out for that a little bit, I guess. They had problems with the ban on menthol cigarettes, pointing out that pretty much all menthol cigarettes are legally purchased now. Their concern is the unintended consequence that, if they're banned from legal outlets, it will be a new busi-

ness for the contraband market in the province of Ontario. That does seem to make some sense. I do wonder whether menthol cigarettes are like the other flavoured tobacco products—really a gateway product. I'm not a smoker, but I wouldn't think that they really are. So I think there is some sense in what they're pointing out.

Obviously, as a province we should be doing all we can to reduce smoking for all the health reasons etc.—costs to the health system, people's lives—but we're not really addressing the issue if we don't also address contraband cigarettes. We haven't done a very good job in the province of Ontario of addressing contraband cigarettes. I believe 40% to 50% of cigarettes sold in this province are contraband.

The Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association pointed out that Quebec is doing a much better job. They passed Bill 59 a few years back, and saw the contraband percentage go from 48% down to 18% in just three years. So it seems to me that we could learn from whatever they're doing in Quebec. One of the differences, they explained to me, was that if you're caught with contraband in Quebec, they can seize your car, much like in hunting. If you're doing something illegal in hunting, a conservation officer in Ontario can seize various things. That would probably be quite a deterrent from people wanting to use contraband cigarettes. It seems to have been effective in Quebec.

They also raised the question of, if you're underage, you can't buy cigarettes but you can smoke them legally in Ontario, so why not ban underage smoking and make it at least a ticketable offence? I think that makes sense. It probably would get rid of the groups of kids outside of our schools in the smoking section, if they knew they were going to get a \$50 ticket, like a speeding ticket, for underage smoking. If you can't buy them, why would it be legal to smoke them? These are some suggestions that I think would be more effective if the government's goal is to reduce smoking eventually to zero in the province of Ontario.

Now schedule 3 in this legislation has to do with e-cigarettes. I must admit, I'm a little conflicted on that one because you hear stories—I've had people writing to me about the benefits of e-cigarettes, in that those people want to use it as a way to stop smoking or greatly reduce their smoking if they substitute e-cigarettes for regular cigarettes.

I think some of the unknown factors are, just what is in the vaping products? I was asking some of the other members if they knew who regulates that. I gather it's unregulated. Really, it is pretty important to know what exactly the nicotine or other chemicals, or who knows what, is in the actual vaping products. That would be something that needs to be looked at and, certainly, probably further studies are required. But we have to be careful that it is, I think, a useful tool for people who are trying to quit smoking.

The other side of the question is, though, and where I'm sure the tobacco companies would like—those e-cigarette companies would use it as a gateway product to

get more people hooked on nicotine, to get more people starting with vaping and then eventually switching to regular cigarettes. So certainly there are some concerns.

The other schedule is schedule 1, the Healthy Menu Choices Act. That's to do with having calorie counts. Let me see here: "Owners and operators of regulated food service premises are required to display the number of calories in each standard food item sold at the premises, as well as any other information required." I don't have a problem with that, especially because it doesn't require, from my understanding the ma-and-pa, one-off operations to do that, which I think would probably be expensive and tricky for them. It's meant for: "Regulated food service premises' are food service premises that sell meals for immediate consumption, and that belong to a chain with 20 or more Ontario locations"—I think that's an important qualifier—so the bigger chains that would have the resources to be able to provide caloric information.

0930

I like the "educate versus legislate" approach, and I think we need to do what we can to encourage people to have healthy lifestyles. In terms of food, that's a balance of eating various food products. You seem to see different reports all the time about what is healthy or what it not healthy for you. As I mentioned some of the times I've had an opportunity to comment on this bill, I'm reading a book called *The Big Fat Surprise*, which is basically telling us that all we've been told about fat being bad for you, a lot of it, is not necessarily true and that saturated fat, like you'd find in meat, for example, or butter or eggs, is actually needed by you.

I think the most important thing is that we have balance in our diet, but the other thing that really goes along with it is that we get enough exercise. I think we need to be doing things to encourage that, in our youth, especially, so they develop habits of enjoying exercise and having lifelong exercise.

Yesterday, I was pleased to attend the Ontario Bike Summit. In the past I've had private member's bills to do with paved shoulders. I think that's important, because we need to provide safe places for people to ride so they have an opportunity to get more exercise. I think we should be designing our schools with safe cycling routes to the schools. There's a new school plan for Parry Sound that's going to be a JK to high school, and I hope it's in a location where the kids can ride to school. I think it's important that we provide opportunities where they can get exercise in a safe manner.

I did want, just in the minute I have left, to mention that I also did meet with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. One of the things that they were asking about—their ask is to restrict marketing to kids to do with food and beverage. They point out that 31.5% of Canadian children and youth are overweight or obese; that the majority of marketed foods and beverage products—as much as 90%—are high in salt, fat, sugar and calories; and that the screen time among children and youth is seven hours and 48 minutes per day. I agree with that suggestion they

have, that we should restrict marketing to kids, because I think it's easy to get them to be consuming more of the things that are bad for them and breaking that balance. So I do think that's a recommendation makes sense.

I can see, Mr. Speaker, that I'm out of time, so I can't get into the other suggestions that the Heart and Stroke Foundation had, but thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to comment on this bill.

As you're well aware, Speaker, it was our health critic, France Gélinas, who persistently introduced private member's bills to ban flavoured tobaccos and to require posting and informing of the public of the nutritional content, the fat content and the caloric content of foods. I think that when this bill is eventually passed, her contribution needs to be recognized.

There's no doubt the member from Muskoka made a very good argument about the need for more exercise for young people and for people in our society generally. I have no argument with that, Speaker; he's right. But I have to say that it would help a lot of people to know, when they purchase food in a restaurant, when they purchase food in a fast food restaurant, how much fat they're taking in, how many calories they're taking in, how much sugar and, frankly, as I think was mentioned, how much sodium as well.

People are often trying to juggle a variety of priorities in their lives, and giving them the information on exactly what their food contains so they can decide whether they're going to get something that is extremely fat-heavy or extremely calorie-heavy will help them make healthier choices. And that's what this is. It isn't prescribing to people what they must eat, but it is allowing them, if they're trying to control their weight, if they're trying to eat in a way that's healthier—giving them the information so they can make the decisions that are in line with their priorities, not the priorities of a company that tries to increase its sales by increasing the salt, sugar or fat content of its foods.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I spoke yesterday on this bill. I just wanted to add a few comments to the speaker today. We certainly encourage the bill in many aspects but we're a little concerned about some of it, like e-cigarettes.

I have a letter from a couple of constituents. I just want to paraphrase a little bit from one of them: "I am genuinely disappointed in what the government has done. You have basically lied to the population. You are going to make it difficult for people with a nicotine addiction to stay off cigarettes. You are ensuring that lifelong smokers will die of smoking-related diseases."

If you go through it, he's talking about the e-cigarettes and basically making it very difficult for many people to use them in certain cases.

I have another one: "I would like to address the proposed Bill 45 conditions regarding [e-cigarettes] and their effect on the industry, human health and our facility. Our studies, and many others worldwide, show that electronic cigarettes are the most effective stop-smoking aid available.

"Treating e-cigs as tobacco is dangerous to this industry, people's health and freedom, and just plain scientifically inaccurate. I would like to request a short discussion" on the subject.

I have a little bit of concern. This is something I hear the government say, that while there's no science to show that there's a problem with them, they'll look at them and maybe unrestrict them in the future, which is very hard. It's just a funny way of going about things. If you look at the components that are in it, it is just vapour. I know many people who have struggled for years and years to try to quit smoking. Most have not been able to. This is a system that has come along that seems to do the trick and is not dangerous to anybody else with them.

I do like parts of the bill, certainly the part about the calories. I think that's important. People struggle with weight, and that would certainly be a step in the right direction as far as getting help for those as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to finish off what I was talking about earlier, about how communities are rallying around food security and helping people make healthy food choices.

One of the concerns, too, is how many people are now accessing food banks. I know that that number is on the rise, people accessing food banks because of difficulties, financially, that they find themselves in with regard to—as I mentioned before—underemployment, precarious employment and working for the minimum wage.

This morning on the news there was the city of Orillia. They had a storm and many trees in their city park were overturned. They're looking at replanting these trees, which is a great thing for the environment. The food bank has suggested that they plant fruit trees because, again, when we talk about food security that people are concerned about, and making healthy choices, the food bank says that it's very expensive to purchase fresh fruit. This would be very helpful and help the food bank bring fruit into their facility when people are accessing food.

Anyway, I just wanted to mention that because we talk about healthy eating, and healthy eating is in everyday life. When you're at home and also when you're going to that restaurant and making those healthy choices, the knowledge that the people will have on those menu labels will certainly help that aspect of it.

The other piece that I have also talked about was the e-smoking. I think that in this particular case there is some tightening up in the bill that we need to really look at under the e-cigarettes section. I look forward to the information that's going to come to committee to make that possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to say that I think this legislation, like many pieces of legislation, is really about trying to make the general public aware and more sensitive to some of the challenges that may be out there in terms of whether it is driving or whether it's the food we eat. I think in the long run that awareness really enables the consumer, the member of the public, to make a better decision.

0940

As you know, the opposite of that is that you get bombarded by all these ads by—God love them—the corporations that want to make billions. If you sit down at night and watch a hockey game, all you're getting is big fat hamburgers. There's one pizza now: a cheeseburger pizza. How gross. We wonder why young people are getting into bad habits, why diabetes is on the rampage.

Smoking, this cancerous habit, has killed millions of people. By the way, as you know, your good friends at the big tobacco companies, Mr. Speaker, denied that smoking was linked with cancer. We remember that. They challenged everybody. Talk about lawsuits. They were just incessant in blocking any attempt to recognize that smoking was linked to cancer. This fight continues, and that's why in this legislation we're looking at e-cigarettes: because they're trying to hook young kids on smoking through the back door, through these e-cigarettes. It says, "Under 19, you can't buy them." This is an ongoing attempt—I think it's a good attempt, in the right direction—to control these big corporations that you're so fond of, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka has two minutes.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the members from Toronto—Danforth, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, London—Fanshawe and Eglinton—Lawrence for their comments.

The member from Toronto—Danforth was talking about the fact that we need more exercise. I completely agree with that. That's why I think we need to look at all ways of getting our youth to pick up habits where they exercise for their entire life. That's why I think it would be a good idea to look at safe cycling routes to school and try to make it a policy of the government that we create safe cycling routes to school to provide our youth the opportunity to get exercise on a daily basis as they get themselves to and from school.

He also talked about the calorie count that will be required by restaurants. I have no problem with that. I think generally with food, we should be moving to less processed food, more making meals from scratch.

E-cigarettes were talked about by the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I think that balancing the benefits of them versus the harm they may cause if they become a gateway product is very important.

The member from London—Fanshawe was talking about food banks. I note that the member from Sarnia—Lambton did have a private member's bill that would

give a tax credit to farmers for extra product that they donated to food banks. I thought that was a good idea, and obviously the government did as well, because it got adopted into the government's Local Food Act. Congratulations to the member from Sarnia-Lambton for coming up with that good idea and getting it implemented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I note that the Progressive Conservatives are certainly keen on health today as many of us are up speaking to it today. It's Bill 45 we're debating today, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014. A similar version was brought in in the last session by the then Minister of Health. Now we see a revised bill including e-cigarettes. Compliments to the NDP from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, for her tenacious promotion of healthier acts that are brought into the Legislature, e-cigarettes being one of them.

The bill touches on three sections: the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014; the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014. I'll just try and talk a bit on all those topics in the few minutes that I have this morning.

We've certainly all spoken about obesity in the Legislature this morning and previously. We had the Heart and Stroke Foundation in last week speaking about the rise of obesity here in Ontario. We all know it's no secret that about half of our population does not meet the physical activity and healthy eating recommendations made by our health organizations.

The member that was up previously mentioned Share the Road, the increase of cycling. I also have many hats in the Legislature, but tourism and culture is one of those. And certainly sharing the road, the paved shoulders, is something that I think all three parties have worked on collectively, that when highways need to be resurfaced that the shoulders are paved. That helps not only with our healthy activities and cycling, but actually is a great tourism boom to many of our areas. I know up in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock we're trying to increase the tourism and the cycling paths that we do have. I know there was a Share the Road event last night, so I wanted to put a plug in for the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who has brought that bill in two, three times now?

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes. And there was somebody from Haliburton there last night, I think.

Ms. Laurie Scott: There you are: Someone from Haliburton was there last night. I actually have gone and cycled with them a few times.

As a nurse before I entered the Legislature, there is no question that the obesity rates that you see increasing are certainly going to be drastic to our health concerns going forward, in treating the diseases that are affected by obesity. Some 28% of children aged two to 17 are overweight, which is extraordinary. Of course, you hear of younger people having heart attacks and strokes and high blood pressure. It's definitely time for some changes to occur.

Education, of course, is the best thing we can do to make them more aware; get the whole family involved. Banning junk food in the schools—you saw that happen and then have you concerns from the principals about the fact that the kids then leave the schools to go out to get the food they actually want to eat; and there's a health concern about them not being on school property and crossing the roads. There is a lot of concern there. So, again, the whole, I think, integration when they're younger from their parents about eating healthy is probably a more wholesome strategy, and ramping up our daily physical activity.

I know the World Health Organization has warned us that the number of overweight children under five years of age is estimated to be over 42 million, and almost all of them are in developed countries like Canada. So I guess we can say fast food is very popular. When I was travelling a long time ago the introduction of McDonald's, I think it was in Japan, had increased the obesity immensely over there. There was just a marked difference—just something I remember from way back.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You must have been just a child.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I was just a child travelling. Thank you, the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

The menu labelling: It's suggested that it's for chains that are over 20 stores. I think that you see that is going to happen more voluntarily in the smaller businesses, the smaller restaurants, because people are actually looking for it. Certainly, when I go into a business, I will look to see if there's any labelling, calorie counts, to see what the healthiest option is to eat.

These things come eventually. We, as legislators, can bring in a certain amount of rules and regulations, but we have to get the education going from home. So we have to do a bit of family responsibility—you see lots of companies that join in: the Big Bike you see for Heart and Stroke through the communities; the whole community sees 50-some people on bicycles that are raising money for Heart and Stroke. That helps influence.

The smoke-free part of it I have spoken to a lot, in the sense of the contraband tobacco, which is a huge issue the government does have to deal with. I spoke again when the Heart and Stroke were in, but, really, almost a third of all tobacco sales in Ontario are contraband. I have a newspaper article from My Kawartha here where the OPP seized contraband tobacco in traffic stops outside of Curve Lake, which is just outside of my riding, in the Peterborough riding. I have to say that I've seen a lot of, let's say, open trunks in some of my communities, and contraband tobacco is being sold from those trunks. That hurts our small businesses. I know the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has spoken many times about that.

Most of the contraband tobacco, if they do the butt surveys from the high schools—I know it seems strange that they go and pick up cigarette butts, but the butt surveys from the high schools show that at least 30%—and some statistics show as high as 50%—are contraband tobacco. And you don't know what's in that contraband tobacco. Smoking is hazardous for your health: proven time and time again. But the fact is that this is not controlled

tobacco. You don't know what's in it, so it's even more harmful, we can say, that it's being sold, especially to our young people.

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Addressing the consumption of tobacco: I had at one time in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock the highest incidence of lung cancer related to smoking; that study was done. I think education has changed that somewhat now: more options or more availability for people to understand the hazards of smoking that are there.

E-cigarettes are interesting. I've had quite a few constituents actually send emails in. I understand the impact of a smoke-free culture, but the e-cigarettes, especially older people—I'll say over 50—actually find them very effective in helping them quit smoking. There seems to be a balance that needs to happen, where the science is about e-cigarettes, because there are actually people out there who find that—"electronic cigarettes" is what I'm saying, "e-cigarettes"—electronic cigarettes actually are helping people stop smoking. I know actually a member in the Legislature who uses that as smoking prevention. So there is the balance out there. I know they want the culture to not be seen smoking in respect to e-cigarettes, but I think that you do have to look at the other side: about e-cigarettes actually helping people to quit smoking.

I know that I only I have a couple of minutes left, but I want to try to hit all the topics that I wanted to talk about.

When we talk about Participation, I do hear that when the schools have increased activities—so-called—for physical activity, I think a lot of schools sometimes don't fully do the physical activity we're thinking of. We don't want kids to sit in chairs and twist their ankles and just move around a little bit. We actually want them to either get outside at recess—and sometimes in the very cold months they can't—but have some alternatives where there is actually activity that causes the heart rate to go up a little. I don't say they have to go into a full-bore workout, but some type of activity that actually causes them to increase their heart rate and make it count as some physical activity that is actually productive to keep them in shape. Again, this is like a pattern that they hopefully carry on throughout their life to make sure they can be involved in sports, if they can be.

I know it's very expensive out there. I want to shout out to the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program, which helps kids that don't have enough money to participate in sports, especially hockey that happens a lot in our small towns, but it's so expensive it actually restricts a lot of kids from joining in physical Participation.

We're happy to see Bill 45 come forward. We're happy, when enough speakers have spoken, to get into committee to make some changes. I raised a few concerns, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for that opportunity this morning, as my time winds down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's always a privilege standing on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, talking to this bill, Bill 45, this morning.

I want to bring a negative and a positive to the tobacco discussion. The negative is, I quit smoking 20 years ago, and every day, I continue to quit smoking because it's always difficult. It has been a lot easier over the course of the years. The difficult part about it now is that one of my family members has been weak to tobacco and has succumbed to peer pressure. I look in his eyes and stand in front of him knowing that I lost my father to lung cancer and I lost my mom to heart disease.

I have to say that there's a good part to this story. My father-in-law, Jean-Guy Constantin, is in Gogama. Bonjour, mon beau-père. He was cutting wood in the backyard—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: His business card would be that long.

Mr. Michael Mantha: What's that?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: His business card would be that long.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes.

He was cutting wood in the backyard, and do you know what? He choked on a little blackfly. When he choked on the blackfly—and he was a smoker at the time—he coughed up some phlegm, and in his phlegm there was a little bit of blood. My mother-in-law took him immediately to the hospital in Timmins. While he was in Timmins, he got an X-ray done. The X-ray showed a small growth. Within a day, he was on the surgery table. The cancer was removed. He has been in remission for seven years. It's because of that little blackfly.

So the next time you hit a blackfly on you, don't hit him too hard; he might be coming around to save you.

That's a positive story that came out of this. My father-in-law is still around today. I love him. He's a grumpy old man, but he's my father-in-law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I just want to make a couple of points. First of all, I support this legislation. I'm particularly impressed with the e-tobacco ban. I too had parents who smoked and paid the ultimate price for that, so for some very personal reasons and for all the right policy reasons, I think this legislation, particularly as it relates to e-cigarettes, is the right thing to do.

Having said that, I want to point out to this House that we've been debating this bill now for 10 hours—10 hours. Listening to the debate, it's clear that all parties support this piece of legislation. In fact, over 60 members from the three parties have spoken to this bill. So we should move this bill ahead, get through second reading, and get the bill out to committee so that we can hear the public's views on it and bring it back for third reading.

It's just strange that we've spent so much time on a piece of legislation that all three parties seem to support, that over 60 members support and have made the effort to speak to.

Why do all three parties support it and why did over 60 members take the time and trouble to speak in support of it? It's because on all three points—on the food labelling, it's the right thing to do. The food labelling

concept developed a couple of decades ago in California, so everything you buy in the store now has the nutritional component of it. This is the next logical step: to have that same information on the restaurant products, on the menus, that you find in products that you buy off of the shelf at a supermarket.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I want to compliment my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for her excellent presentation, even though it was only 10 minutes. She's a health professional, and she knows her stuff.

When we talk about this particular bill, Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, a couple of things come to mind for me. I remember back when I was a teenager and it was kind of cool to smoke. That was the cool thing—no pun intended, with regard to menthol cigarettes.

The other thing is that my father was a smoker and he also smoked pipes. I remember green Sail tobacco. I found myself looking at the cherry-flavoured tobacco and found that it had a nice fragrance. You weren't realizing or really caring that much about the impact it was having on your lungs and the potential cancer threats and so on.

The other thing I wanted to talk about is the fact that there's childhood obesity out there. The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock mentioned in her speech that we need to get our children more active. It's going on okay in the grade schools, but in high schools, if I had my way, I would like to see health and physical education mandatory in every year that the students are there. It was mandatory for me. I think that kids need to be more aware of the importance of physical activity in their lives.

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The last thing I wanted to talk about was the fact that there are approximately 13,000 people in Ontario who die every year—that's 36 people a day, and it's tragic. We've got to take a look at the burden on our health care system. Anything we can do to alleviate and move children and even adults away from smoking will be a greater benefit for our health care system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it's a pleasure to stand in my place today and make comments on the response of my friend from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I know when she mentioned the junk food in high schools, I was reminded of the time I was out and about and bumped into a woman—I think she was the president of the student council at Essex high school. She said, "Do you think the government's ever going to revisit that?" I said, "I don't think so. Why?" "Well, we used to get a share of the profits from the machines at the cafeteria, and we don't get it anymore because our kids aren't eating the food in the school anymore because they've taken the bad stuff out. They're going"—as the member said—"across the street, down the road, and getting the fast food." We know the fast food isn't good for you.

Smoking's not good for you, either. My mom and dad smoked, my wife's mom and dad smoked, and 37 years ago, when my son was born, we said, "No more smoking around the kids." So that put an end to that. They all stopped smoking. Two of them are still alive, which is a good thing.

The habits that we pick up when we're young stick with us forever. I was saying the other day how my mom used to bake homemade bread, and I would do everything I could to eat food with my bread. I forgot to mention my mom's homemade baked beans: I would get bread and butter and make those homemade baked-bean sandwiches. I miss them so much, Speaker. If they had them downstairs, I'd have them for lunch.

But those are habits that we pick up when we're young, and they stick with us forever. They stick with us forever. So if we can break the habits now, get the kids eating healthy now, maybe they'll continue that, and their children will pick up those good habits instead of the bad habits that I picked up when I was young.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes has two minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I don't think I'll forget that, now that you've mentioned the blackfly story and your father-in-law. It's very important to watch those little signs that do occur in which you need further health investigation.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: It's always good to have healthy debate in the Legislature. As I said, this bill was brought forward in the last session. They could have sped it up and put it through then, but anyway, we are very happy to continue the debate. There's never enough debate on healthy choices that we have here.

The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex: I thank him for his comments, and the member for Windsor-Tecumseh, certainly, about the school story, a very valid school story about the fact that you can't force kids to do what you think is good for them. That's why you have to start the education early. Hopefully, the parents have instilled some good eating habits for them, at least half the time, that you can eat properly, but it certainly is a concern out there.

I wanted to mention that Health Canada is actually doing some research into the e-cigarettes, so I say to the government, maybe we should watch for the Health Canada studies before we make any final declaration on the electronic cigarettes issue of this bill because, as I said, some people actually find they help them in smoking cessation.

I think that there is always a lot that we can do to promote healthy choices, but we should maybe be mindful of how it's actually going to affect the public. We used the young children, for banning junk foods in the schools: It still didn't stop them from eating junk food; we just put them in more of a dangerous situation as they leave the schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to stand in this House today to speak to this bill.

I know that if we don't listen to our constituents, we are not going to be successful in this position. What I want to do is read a few letters that were sent to me—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's pretty noisy, down in the third party area. If you want to have a major discussion—and you've had about nine of them—if you'd like to go outside with it, I'd appreciate it.

Member from Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker.

This letter was sent to me by the Perth District Health Unit. They are members of what they call the Think Team. I had three of them in my office during constituency week. They're all young folks, they're very concerned and they're very supportive of this bill.

It goes like this: "We are the members of the Think Team who work to promote healthy lifestyles for Perth county youth. Our team educates youth in our schools, community and on social media about important health issues, including significant work preventing youth from starting to use tobacco. As youth that are engaged and active advocates for youth health in Perth county, we would like to inform you that we are strong supporters of Bill 45, Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014. There are many reasons why we believe, as youth, this bill should be passed in our provincial Parliament.

"We see an increasing number of our peers using electronic cigarettes in Perth county. Since there is currently no legislation regarding electronic cigarettes, they can be sold to and used by youth. We have worked with local school boards to restrict the use of electronic cigarettes in our schools, but further legislation is required to protect our peers from this new product. We are working on a campaign to educate youth about electronic cigarettes, but this legislation will help prevent youth from using them in the first place. Electronic cigarettes are normalizing the act of smoking and reversing all of the good work tobacco control has accomplished. The Making Healthier Choices Act would restrict electronic cigarettes from being promoted and sold to youth under the age of 19.

"The tobacco industry flavours tobacco products as candy and fruit to make them more appealing to youth. Chew tobacco, cigarillos and electronic cigarettes are all flavoured tobacco products and are most popular among youth. Making tobacco products less appealing by not including any flavouring will prevent youth from starting to use tobacco products. The Making Healthier Choices Act would prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol, which would decrease the likelihood of our peers and future generations of youth from using tobacco products."

Now they go into the menu labelling: "Finally, menu labelling of caloric values in restaurants would also be beneficial to Perth county youth. Menu labelling will help our peers to make more informed and smarter decisions when it comes to eating out. Today's youth are

busy and constantly on the go, so having the option to make healthy and nutritious decisions when they eat out is important. Being able to see directly ... in a pamphlet or on a website. The Making Healthier Choices Act would require restaurants with 20 or more locations to post caloric information on their menus and menu board. Menu-labelling legislation is a key component of the Healthy Kids Strategy, which aims to reduce childhood obesity by 20% over five years.

"We hope that you agree with our position and will support the passing of this bill, which is crucial to the health of Perth county youth. If your schedule allows," they would like to schedule a meeting with me, which they did, Speaker. Three of them came in to speak to me.

This letter is signed by members of the Think Team: Kelsey Ramseyer, Zach Misener, Alli Van Bakel, Amanda Roberts, Megan Speiran and Dani Schoonderwoerd. It's also signed by the medical officer of health, Dr. Miriam Klassen, who is with the Perth District Health Unit. I personally know Dr. Klassen, as she was my family doctor at one time, until she got this position as the medical officer of health.

I also received a letter from another constituent, Brian Reid, who is from Mitchell. He writes: "I am writing to convey my strong support for the tobacco provisions in Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

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"Amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act included in Bill 45 would ban flavourings, including menthol, in all tobacco products. Adding enticing flavours to tobacco products is one of the key ways that tobacco companies entice youth and young adults to experiment with tobacco. A government that is serious about reducing the unacceptable toll of illness and death from tobacco use must do everything possible to prevent tobacco companies from seducing our youth. Tobacco companies will likely claim that only adults use tobacco with menthol, but recent research tells a very different story.

"The latest Youth Smoking Survey shows that almost a third of youth who smoked in the past month smoked a menthol cigarette (and almost half of those who had used some type of tobacco in the past month had used a flavoured product). This is 2015—we have known for more than 50 years that smoking causes cancer—it is time for governments to stop bowing to pressure from the tobacco companies. I urge you to oppose any demands from the industry for an exemption for menthol. Governments should be doing everything they can to prevent youth from starting to smoke and to encourage people to quit. Banning all flavours in all types of tobacco products would make a valuable contribution to this effort.

"Bill 45 also contains critical legislation to regulate electronic cigarettes. The bill would ban the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, limit their promotion, and ban their use in workplaces and public places like restaurants, where smoking is already banned. I understand that e-cigarettes might help some smokers quit, but I also believe that if they are not appropriately controlled, we could see a new generation of youth addicted to a new

form of nicotine. As well, I personally do not want to be exposed to whatever chemicals the vapour may contain. Much more research needs to be done on these products, and until we have more information about their impact, the government is right to exercise caution.

"Once again, I would like to reiterate my strong support for these really important tobacco control initiatives. We have made great progress in creating a 'smoke-free Ontario,' but with 18% of Ontarians still smoking—a rate that hasn't changed since 2009—much more remains to be done."

This letter was sent to me by Brian Reid from Mitchell, as I have already mentioned.

Speaker, I think we as politicians and elected officials to this House need to listen to our constituents—that is why we're here—and to support or not support legislation that they ask us to do. Certainly, these two letters are in support of this bill. I'm pleased that they took time not only to write these letters to me but to visit my office.

We had a chat, a very good chat, with these people from the Think Team. They're just young high school students who are leaders in their community, in their high school, who took the initiative to set up this meeting to express their concern—not their concern with the bill, but their support for this bill. I do appreciate that. I think that's what we do as legislators: We have to represent, and we should represent, the constituents in our riding.

Speaker, I have another letter here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Actually, my wife canvasses our neighbourhood for the Heart and Stroke Foundation and goes around. They do great work promoting healthier lifestyles. Certainly, smoking is on their radar.

I don't have enough time to read the whole letter. It was sent to me by Mark Holland. I'm sure everybody got this one. It was sent to me by Mark Holland, the executive director, Ontario mission, and national director of children and youth at Heart and Stroke Foundation; and Rowena Pinto, the vice-president of public affairs and strategic initiatives of the Canadian Cancer Society in the Ontario division. I'm sure all members got this letter, so they can read it at their leisure.

Again, Speaker, thank you for this time. I think this bill is certainly something that is supported by members of my community.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to ask the House to welcome members of CUPE Ontario who are here today with their president, Fred Hahn, for their lobby day. I know that many members will be meeting with them. Also, I understand that all members are invited to join Fred and his colleagues at 5 p.m. for their MPP reception in the legislative dining room. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the world works in mysterious ways: my friends the Tories welcoming CUPE. Anyway, nonetheless, as New Democrats, we'd like to welcome, on behalf of all the Legislature, Fred Hahn, Carrie Lynn Poole-Cotnam, John Camilleri, Kelly O'Sullivan and our good friend Henri Giroux that I know the member from Nipissing knows very well.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I do things in tandem with my other two House leaders, so I want to join them and join all the members in welcoming the hard-working members of our public service, represented by CUPE Ontario and my good friend Fred Hahn. All of you: Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for your public service.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we continue, I would like to know that we can get through introducing guests without heckling. That would be very helpful.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today our page from Huron-Bruce is page captain Rahul, and I'm pleased to welcome his mother, Priya Pandya, to the gallery.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce page captain Japneet Kaur's mom, Jaswant Kaur, and father Robin, who are joining us in the gallery today.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: April is Sikh Heritage Month, and I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to wear a pin commemorating April as Sikh Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Brampton West is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pin for Sikh Heritage Month. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce Dave Murphy. Dave is with CUPE, and he represents Hamilton Health Sciences.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome to the Legislature the grade 12 students from Silverthorn Collegiate. They're taking an elective grade 12 politics class. I would ask you to join me in welcoming them to the Legislature. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I do want to welcome our friend Henri Giroux from North Bay to the Legislature today.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to thank two people who were instrumental in having these pins made, and they're here today: Gursimrat Singh Grewal and Baljinder Sara. Baljinder is here with his family: Virpal Kaur, Parneet Kaur, Anisha Kaur and his father, Gurdev Kaur, and Balvir Kaur. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome Len Elliott, a constituent of mine from OPSEU, who is here today in the gallery, as well as my friend Heather Skolly, who's here today with CUPE.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

It is now time for question period.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If the member is not here, we'll stand down the lead question.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, point of order: We don't have on our list that the Minister of Finance is not going to be here for question period, so I'm seeking some guidance. Is he coming?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: He's on his way.

Mr. Steve Clark: So we can stand down our leads?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've indicated that it's a courtesy that is offered, of who is here or not here. That courtesy doesn't always mean that that person will or will not be here.

That said, you always have the option to stand down your lead question, if that person needs to hear the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please.

I will have that stood down, and we may end up having to go through extra rotations. I understand that. I am going to ask that the table restart the clock. Once I make the indication of how, the member from Timmins—James Bay will stand on a point of order and ask me something.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We were unaware that we were going to have the lead stand down. We have gone to get our leader. She's not here just now, so we're going to have to go with question 3.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. One moment, please.

I'm going to look to the House leaders for a nod on this. If we take a five-minute recess for everyone's purposes—we will take a five-minute recess. This House stands recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1037 to 1041.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Two years ago, your deficit was \$9.2 billion. Last year, your deficit soared to \$10.5 billion. Yesterday, you said you were pleased to report your deficit grew again to \$10.9 billion.

Minister, the only deficit target you should be pleased with is when you hit zero. You're heading the wrong way. You're getting further away from balancing, not closer. You're now spending \$29 million a day more than you're bringing in. In fact, in today's five-minute delay, you spent \$105,000 more than you took in.

Minister, you're failing families, you're hurting seniors, and you're putting them into an ever-deepening hole. Why should anyone believe you can balance the budget when you can't even reduce the deficit?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection: You're overachieving.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will act immediately on anyone who tries to get in heckles while I'm standing.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, the member opposite has noted the challenges that have been before this province over the last 10 years. Recognizing how tough it was in 2008 and 2009—not just in Ontario but all across Canada, similar to the situation that happened with the federal government—Ontario has taken action by stimulating growth. This year, we beat our targets yet again by \$1.6 billion. We do so by moving the trajectory to balance by 2017-18, as we said we would. We're on target. We're achieving results.

We're the lowest-cost government because of some of the tremendous actions we've taken on Treasury Board to reduce our spending, find savings and keep our fiscal house in order. Contrary to the opposition, we do want to stimulate the economy to ensure that we grow GDP, make sure that everyone is employed and make sure people and their families are better off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, we realize it's April Fool's Day today, but you have to stop trying to fool the people of Ontario. Your own 2013 budget document listed the projected deficit at \$10.1 billion. The fact that you fluffed it up to a fake \$12.5-billion forecast only to announce it came in at \$1.9 billion didn't fool us, Minister.

Let's go back to the secret internal cabinet documents we obtained during the gas plant scandal file. They talked about doing just what you did. Use a fake number for the deficit that was "never a real expectation. It was a deliberate policy...."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Even that fake, inflated number was \$10.1 billion. You can't even meet your own fake number, Minister.

When are you going to come clean and tell us the real state of Ontario's economy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is serious business. The member opposite is slamming the province; he's talking down Ontario, which has worked hard—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario has now, since the recession, surpassed almost every jurisdiction around the world to create 500,000 net new jobs. Ontario has become the top destination in all of North America, beating out Texas, New York, California and every other province for foreign direct investment. We're attracting in-

vestment, and that's because they know that we have a very competitive, and ensure that we have a very competitive, business climate to keep our taxes low to attract that investment.

We're creating jobs. We're stimulating growth. We're on a track to balance by 2017-18, as we said we would.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the minister: Now that we've heard the spin, let's hear the facts. The Conference Board of Canada said you can't balance the books by 2017-18. In their report titled *How Bad Is It?*, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce said, "Ontario's fiscal situation is becoming increasingly dire..." and "we are likely to reach a state of crisis unless the province ... changes the ways it does business." Moody's lowered their outlook from stable to negative. Fitch downgraded us to AA-. Everyone but you understands there's a serious problem in Ontario. Minister, when will you finally take the advice of experts and change course?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Conference Board of Canada also states that Ontario, the government of Ontario, has the most integrity of its numbers than any other government in Canada. The Conference Board of Canada also states that Ontario is expected to lead all of Canada with growth in GDP because of the stimulus package that we put in place.

RBC, TD Bank and a number of economists recognize the tremendous work that Ontarians have done, that this province and this government have done, to stimulate growth in order—not only so that we can create greater revenue and greater wealth, but we are the lowest-cost government in Canada because of the efforts we've taken. We have controlled our spending, we're keeping our fiscal house in order, to take a balanced approach, not extreme measures that put people in harm's way or cut 100,000 people from their jobs, as the opposition has recommended.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Minister of Finance: Your deficit, which grew from \$9.2 billion to \$10.5 billion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket—Aurora, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —ballooning to \$10.9 billion this year, is proof that you're not listening to the experts. You're not changing the way you do business.

Minister, here's why all the focus on your deficit is so important: The Auditor General said, "Ontario's debt continues to grow faster than the province's economy, which could have negative implications for the province's finances." But her —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the members from Ottawa—Orléans and Hamilton East—Stoney Creek to come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, that shouldn't be interpreted as encouragement.

Please finish.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

The Auditor General's biggest concern was "the 'crowding out' of other spending...." We now have less money for the things our citizens expect from the province. We're starting to see front-line cuts in health care and education, just as the auditor warned. Minister, are you too proud to admit you're wrong?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House will not fall prey to being reckless when it comes to cutting and slashing and burning the very services that Ontarians depend upon. We're also not going to be reckless in our spending, recognizing that we must maintain our house in fiscal order and hold the line—and we are, because we've become the lowest-cost government per capita in funding and spending by any government in comparison.

1050

We also note this: We have become one of the lowest-tax jurisdictions anywhere in the world, beating out every US state when it comes to the combined corporate income tax. We have also maintained very effective stimulus packages to encourage that investment and create those jobs that are so critical to families in Ontario. By so doing, we take that balanced approach. It's a measured approach that we said all along we would do. And we are disciplined and determined to balance by 2017—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, we're seeing death by a thousand cuts right now, today, here in Ontario. Nurses are being cut at hospitals right across the province. We all have examples. Here are some from my hometown of North Bay: 94 full-time and 34 part-time front-line health care workers, including nurses, have been cut; more than 50 positions, including professors, at Nipissing University, have been cut; 43 workers from Ontario Northland have been cut.

Will you admit, Minister, that your wasteful, scandalous and mismanaged spending is reducing services, hurting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Will you admit that your wasteful, scandalous and mismanaged spending is reducing services, hurting Ontario's children and putting the most vulnerable at risk?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll admit that the member opposite is confused because he is—what's the

term?—sucking and blowing. On the one hand, he's suggesting that we make cuts. He's suggesting, "Go across the board and find greater savings, and put people in harm's way," just as he ran on a platform to cut 100,000 jobs from Ontarians. Now he's saying, "Wait a minute. You're cutting too much."

Mr. Speaker, we're not doing that at all. We're taking a balanced approach. We're transforming the way government does business. The President of the Treasury Board is going line by line to ensure that everything we do is creating greater value for Ontarians, ensuring that we hold the line on our spending.

What they're not doing is stimulating the economy. They're not supporting transit and investment in infrastructure that enables us to do better. That is exactly what this budget is going to be all about. It is enabling us to succeed and surpass other provinces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, on your watch, seniors and our most vulnerable have seen their hydro rates triple to the point where they need to decide whether it's food or warmth. But that wasn't enough for you. Your thirst to find even more money to feed your spending addiction seems to have no bounds. You cut cataract surgeries, you cut diabetes testing strips, you cut physiotherapy for seniors. This is exactly the crowding out the Auditor General told you would happen if you didn't drastically change course.

A \$10.9-billion deficit built on self-interest is not a cause for celebration; it's a legacy of disgrace, and you should be ashamed of it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontario was hit very hard during the recession. In fact, we were hit the first and the hardest, and we stayed the course and held our ground; Ontarians stood tall and strong, continuing to reinvest in enabling us not to feel the shock of the recession as deeply and as long as other places around the world.

He referenced some recommendations by Don Drummond. Not only have we surpassed all the work that was being recommended, we have now made even greater strides to ensure that we sustain even more savings going forward.

What the opposition is not talking about is investing in our people, investing in education and our skills and training, investing in infrastructure and transit that enables us to provide for more jobs and maintaining a very competitive and dynamic business climate so that we can create more jobs in our province. Mr. Speaker, that's what we are doing.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier tell me on what page of

the Liberal platform Ontarians can find the Liberal plan to sell off Hydro One and local electricity utilities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite knows full well that in our budget—which they rejected not once but twice, the most progressive budget in living memory—we included in that the asset review because we are committed to building the infrastructure that this province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are committed to building the infrastructure that the people of this province are demanding of this government. We need more investments in transit. We need more investments in transportation. We need more investments in the vital infrastructure that people depend on.

We have to pay for that, and that's why we're looking at our assets to see how we can recycle those assets to build the infrastructure of tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I know it's April Fool's Day, but most Ontarians have realized that that budget is anything but progressive.

Nick from Brampton wrote to the Premier, and he was good enough to copy my office on his letter to the Premier. This is what Nick said: "At no time did you ever state during your election campaign to the voting public that your platform included selling any valuable asset owned by the taxpayers of Ontario."

What does the Deputy Premier have to say to people like Nick?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would expect that the leader of the third party would have read the budget. I can refer you to page 20 of the budget. Let me read this to you: "The government will look at maximizing and unlocking value from assets it currently holds, including real estate holdings as well as crown corporations such as"—wait for it—"Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario."

Page 4 of the Ontario Liberal plan says: "Our Moving Ontario Forward plan includes a balanced and responsible approach to paying for these investments."

"The funds will be from dedicated sources of revenue...."

"—asset optimization: \$3.15 billion or 10.9%."

It was in the budget, and if ever we wanted evidence that the third party did not read that budget, Speaker, we have it today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, maybe the Deputy Premier should have been honest and said "sell-off" instead of "unlocking" and "optimizing," and people might have been able to get it.

Lena is another person who wrote to me. Lena said: "Private, for-profit ownership of hydro will mean higher

rates, lower dependability and an end to public control over this vital function.”

Can the Deputy Premier give people like Lena any guarantee that the Liberal privatization plan won't mean higher bills, less reliability and an end to public management of an important public utility?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Not only were we very, very clear in the 2014 budget—which was twice rejected by the third party, which triggered the unnecessary election—but the third party also integrated our fiscal assumptions into their platform. So not only did they not read our budget; they did not read their own assumptions in their own budget.

She knows we have a mandate to move forward with unlocking the value of assets. We've been very clear: We are looking to unlock the value of those assets so we can invest in schools, in hospitals and in roads and bridges, and create jobs and build that necessary transportation and transit infrastructure.

Despite what the NDP says, we asked the council to retain the government's long-term ownership of the assets' core components. “We recommend keeping all three companies,” said Ed Clark.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Investing in transit and transportation isn't a one-time deal. It's going to take investment year in and year out. The Liberals' answer is a one-time sell-off of Hydro One and local utilities. They'll get a lump sum of money, but that money is going to run out, and we'll be left paying higher hydro rates to private companies that have no accountability, no oversight and no interest in what's good for Ontarians. When the money runs out, we're going to be right back here, and the Premier will have to find something else to sell off.

1100

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development—second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What happened to long-term, sustainable solutions for building and paying for infrastructure in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. Listen, we recognize how important it is for us to reinvest where we can, to make even more money for the shareholders of this province, who are the people of Ontario, the taxpayers, who own these crown corporations.

We also made it clear in the 2014 budget that we would look at these endeavours and these initiatives in order to maximize value to Ontario. We are not going to put our heads in the sand and pretend that there isn't something that we can do better. That's why we're taking these initiatives.

The member opposite also should know that we used this as a platform in our last election, which the people of Ontario endorsed.

I just want to read these three principles that we abide by on this very issue:

“(1) The public interest remains paramount and protected;

“(2) Decisions align with maximizing value to Ontarians;

“(3) The decision process remains transparent, professional and independently validated.”

We're working in the interests of Ontarians, who own these very crown corporations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Liberals sell off Hydro One, this is going to be the result: Ontarians will pay higher hydro bills. The Premier will get a big lump of cash—there's no doubt—but when the cash is spent, Ontarians will still be paying skyrocketing hydro bills in this province, and there won't be any money left for any other infrastructure investments.

Why can't this Liberal government see the big picture when it comes to our hydro assets?

Hon. Charles Sousa: First off, rates in Ontario are, and always will be, set by the Ontario Energy Board. But secondly, we have established a Trillium Trust, a trust to reinvest in transit. Any proceeds that are gained from selling off land or shares of corporations that we may own, that aren't providing enough support for the people of Ontario, are invested into this trust, which is dedicated to transit.

This is about investing in transit, investing in infrastructure, to make us even more competitive. That has a greater return for Ontarians. For every dollar we invest, we get \$1.60 back. That's a much better return.

We want to ensure that we protect the interests of the public, and it's an ongoing benefit. What we will not do is sell off, something that happened with the 407, recognizing that we lost an annuity there. That is exactly what we're not going to do. We're going to make every effort to ensure that we—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hydro One makes money each and every year. We can leverage public control to manage hydro rates. We can help with climate change, strengthen manufacturing and create jobs.

Robust, reliable, profitable, public hydro actually helps fund investment in public transit and transportation annually in this province, because it puts money annually into the public coffers.

Will the Liberal government finally abandon this ridiculous scheme to sell off our hydro utility and Hydro One?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We can always do better with respect to our crown corporations. We know that there are a number of dividends we receive, and we want to protect them. In fact, we want to enhance them and provide for greater return and greater value for money in regard to them. That's what we're doing here, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite doesn't seem to feel it's necessary to invest in transit—with respect to ensuring that we

become more competitive—with roads, bridges and infrastructure across this province. She feels that we don't have to do that, by way of looking at ways we can repurpose or revalue some of our assets to maximize that opportunity. They would rather we not do anything—and that is not an answer to the problem.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Attorney General. I think we can all agree that rising municipal insurance premiums must be reined in. In fact, we did all agree to that. Last February, I introduced a private member's resolution to implement a comprehensive, long-term solution to reform joint and several liability for municipalities. My motion received unanimous consent from all parties in this Legislature.

Minister, a year ago, your government agreed that this was a serious issue and that it must be addressed. That's why municipalities were so shocked when you told last year's AMO conference that you wouldn't do anything about it.

Municipalities want to know: Why did you change your mind and why won't you help them?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for his question. Legal liability reform is an important and complex issue that significantly affects a diverse group of stakeholders in Ontario. The law commissions in Ontario, other provinces and other countries have examined this issue and determined that the rule of joint and several liability is the fairest way of dealing with a shortfall in damage. After considering the feedback we received from all stakeholders—from all stakeholders—Ontario has decided not to move forward with changes to the rule in joint and several liability at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked at it. We have consulted with many stakeholders. This joint and several liability process has been in place for almost a hundred years and it will continue to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Again to the Attorney General: For years, this government has been promising action. I've seen the Attorney General's files. They show that you sought advice from trial lawyers. They show that you sought no advice from insurers, municipalities or taxpayers.

At the recent ROMA/OGRA conference, I spoke with many municipal officials. Overwhelmingly, they are furious. It's time to respect the will of municipalities across Ontario and respect the resolution that was passed in this House by all parties last year. Will you do it? Will you support the resolution I tabled two months ago?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll say that to the member of the opposition: If your son has an accident and he's totally disabled, I will not be able to look in his eyes and say, "Your dad and I, when it was possible to do so, changed the rules, and now you have to rely on welfare for your benefits." I wouldn't be able to do that. That's why, after the consultation, we decided that we will continue with this joint and several liability.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Can you confirm if the Premier's legal team has been in discussion with the legal teams for either Pat Sorbara or Mr. Lougheed in order to coordinate their defence?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're delighted that the member from Sudbury has joined our caucus. He is a very, very fine member.

The member from Timmins—James Bay knows full well that we're taking this seriously, that the Premier is co-operating completely with the investigation. He also knows that this investigation is taking place outside of this Legislature, by people who are competent and qualified to perform such investigations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, definitely no answer, just more rhetoric on the part of the government. So I'll ask it again: Is the Premier's legal team in discussion with the legal team from both Mr. Lougheed and Mrs. Sorbara when it comes to co-ordinating their defence in regards to the bribery allegation? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, there's an investigation taking place. The Premier and all of us are co-operating fully with that investigation when asked. That investigation is taking place outside of this Legislature, which is where it should be taking place.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Labour. In my riding of Halton, a number of organizations have advocated for better income supports, including increases to the minimum wage, tax relief for low-income earners and better protections for workers across Ontario. Groups like Poverty Free Halton, Community Development Halton and the Halton Poverty Roundtable have all asked for stronger supports for workers.

In my community, workers were pleased when the minimum wage was increased to \$11 an hour last June, but we have all seen what inflation does to the cost of living. Minimum wage workers are particularly hard hit by the soaring costs of goods in Ontario.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please explain how our government is addressing this issue for minimum wage earners in the retail, food service and other sectors in my riding?

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member from Halton for the question. As you will know, last summer our government brought in the eighth increase to the minimum wage since we were first elected in 2003. Those of you in the House will remember that, in 2003, when we took over from the party across, working for an hour at minimum wage in Ontario earned you \$6.85—even less if you were a student. We've come a long way.

Last spring, we announced that the minimum wage would increase from \$10.25 to \$11. We introduced legislation that would tie further increases to the minimum wage to those same increases we see in the consumer price index. That legislation died on the order paper when the party across triggered the election we had last spring. Through the leadership of our Premier, though, Speaker, we brought that legislation back last fall and we've been able to pass it. This follows through on our commitment to tie annual increases in the minimum wage to the rate of inflation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a member of a party that is standing up for the hard-working minimum wage earners across our province.

The minister is correct. We have come a long way: from \$6.85 an hour to \$11 per hour and, soon, \$11.25 an hour. Some are advocating for an even higher minimum wage. But some small business owners in Halton have concerns that rising minimum wages might result in slow growth or even job cuts. With global economic uncertainty and the evolving nature of our economy, the way forward must be carefully considered. We must balance the needs of businesses while ensuring that our minimum wage earners keep up with the rising cost of living. Speaker, can the minister please explain how he plans to reach this balance?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again for the supplementary. All hard-working Ontarians need to know that the income they have will keep up with the cost of living. Part of the reason we tied annual increases in the minimum wage to the CPI was to take the politics out of the decision.

Another reason was to ensure that businesses in this province have a predictable and fair way to plan for the annual increase. Each year, the government announces the new minimum wage before April 1. Businesses then have six months to prepare for that increase, and it comes into effect October 1.

This new process that we have in place was part of the recommendations of the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. It advised the government on the best approach to take. We heard from experts; we heard from workers; we heard from businesses. They want stable and predictable increases to the minimum wage.

I'm proud to say that on this side of the House we're bringing forward the ninth increase to the minimum wage since we took office, and that families and businesses in this province now have the time to adequately prepare for it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Why is the minister reneging on his government's commitment to the Rouge National Urban Park and putting the whole thing at risk by playing petty, partisan political games?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This member may not realize it, but he's speaking to a member who has dedicated the last

30 years of his life to preserving this park. It is in my own backyard as a member from Scarborough. It's something I've worked on since I was a young lad, working in these halls as an assistant. So for you to question my commitment to this park is absolutely ridiculous. For the member to question this government's commitment to this park—this was the government, under David Peterson, that saved the Rouge park.

This is the only government right now that's standing up to make sure that the current protections we have in place are maintained, which is part of the agreement the federal government made. We will not sell out our commitment to that next generation—to ensure the park is there for them to enjoy. Even if you want us to do that, we're not going to.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: More than two years ago, Ontario signed an agreement to transfer land to the federal government to help create the Rouge National Urban Park in Scarborough. However, the minister recently decided to go back on his word and derail the entire process for no good reason. He even has the gall to use it for Liberal fundraising.

The Globe and Mail recently said this: "Ontario's justification for pulling out of the deal doesn't hold up to scrutiny."

The Globe went on to say that he's "playing games," and, "It appears that the interests of his government don't include letting the federal Conservatives announce a new national park in the GTA during this election cycle."

When will the minister keep his word and stop holding up the Rouge National Urban Park?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I gave some people a warning about me standing and their continuing to heckle.

Answer, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this government remains absolutely committed to a federal national park at some point in time when the federal government is willing to live up to their part of that agreement. They were supposed to put forward legislation that was equal to or greater than the protections that we currently have in Ontario today. I have a legal document that verifies that that is simply not the case, and I've had legal representation take a look at that just to ensure that our position is credible, and our position is absolutely credible. The current federal legislation is much weaker than the protections that land has now.

You're asking us to pass on that land to weaker federal protections. We're not going to do it. We're not going to do it.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government ought to work with us to put in place the proper protections for these—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The same holds true on this side.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Speaker, today Londoners learned that double-salary deals in lieu of leave for senior university executives are not new in the sector. In fact, the president of Western University received an earlier double payout in 2009 when he was at the University of Waterloo.

Acting Premier, when you became aware of the double payout in 2009, why did your government do nothing to prevent these kinds of deals, which result in million-dollar salaries, from being negotiated by university boards of governors?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we passed Bill 8. We introduced Bill 8 prior to the election. We would have passed it sooner had an unnecessary election not been triggered. When we reintroduced the legislation, the NDP voted against the legislation that would give us the opportunity to control executive compensation.

We acknowledge that there is a problem with executive compensation in the broader public sector. That's why we introduced Bill 8. That is why we are moving forward to develop the frameworks for appropriate executive compensation.

So, Speaker, they're just a little bit late to this party. Why they voted against the legislation that will give us the right to actually control executive compensation in the broader public sector—makes their accusations a little bit hollow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: On Monday the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities said that the public has a right to know that tax dollars are being spent properly, but on Tuesday he said that universities are autonomous institutions and can make their own hiring and contract decisions.

Acting Premier, Ontario students are facing the highest tuition rates in Canada, increasing class sizes and more classes taught by contract faculty than ever before.

How can the public be assured that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately when university boards of governors are allowed to write double-salary clauses into the contracts of senior university executives?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me repeat: Bill 8 gave the government the ability to actually control broader public sector executive compensation. That is a good piece of legislation. This House passed it without the support of the NDP, so how they can stand up and criticize us for not taking action, when they voted against

the very action that they're demanding now, is just beyond me.

We are on this. We are addressing this issue because we do believe that the taxpayers of this province, the citizens of this province, should know why people are paid what they are paid. Those are the answers that we are developing right now as we speak.

1120

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Ontario's forestry industry contributes about \$11 billion to our economy and supports about 200,000 direct and indirect jobs. This includes Cherry Forest Products in Puslinch, Ontario, very near my riding of Cambridge, which employs over 100 workers.

In 2013, Ontario exported \$4.9 billion in forest products. Forestry operations can only realize their full economic potential when there's synergy between operations. Sawmill operators rely on selling their residuals in order to maintain their economic viability. Therefore, it's imperative that Ontario finds innovative ways to put wood waste to work. One potential use of wood waste is bio-mass energy.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: What is our government doing to support innovative uses, such as biomass, for forestry residuals?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. There are in fact some very encouraging signs in the forestry industry right now. We are seeing a number of new sawmills opening on a regular basis. We are now harvesting upwards of 14 million cubic metres of wood. In the depth of the recession in forestry, we were down to about eight million cubic metres.

In fact, a new industry in northern Ontario called biomass pellet production has just begun. A couple of weeks ago, I was in Atikokan with my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and with the support of \$4 million from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, we have seen two biomass pellet production facilities open, one in Wawa and one in Atikokan.

It's good news for the forest industry. It will help them ride through the cyclical ups and downs that we have traditionally seen in the industry. It's new. It's creating more jobs. It's another good piece of what we're seeing happen in forestry, a piece of the industry that did not exist until these two operations got started, so we're very proud of this piece in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I thank the minister not only for the answer but also for his commitment to supporting Ontario's forestry sector.

Maintaining a market for forestry residuals is a key part of supporting the economic viability of mills throughout Ontario. I know that this investment will go a long way in supporting this very important sector.

By increasing our use of biomass energy, Ontario can reduce our use of fossil fuels and reduce our carbon footprint. Unlike oil, gas or coal, which emit carbon absorbed from the environment thousands of years ago, there's no additional carbon released from the combustion of biomass; it emits the same carbon that it absorbed just a few months or years ago. In fact, two million tonnes of wood pellets could produce 3.4 billion kilowatt hours of electricity per year. This is sufficient to power about 285,000 homes in Ontario.

Speaker, again through you to the minister: What is our government doing to put wood waste to work and support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Bill Mauro: In 2003, all political parties made a commitment to close coal in the province of Ontario. We've followed through on that commitment, and I know our Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is very happy that we've actually begun to do that.

Speaker, my point is that that policy of closing coal in Ontario has led directly to the conversion of two of those old coal plants, one in Thunder Bay and one in Atikokan. That conversion of those coal plants has indirectly, I would say—if not directly—led to the spawning of this new industry here in the province of Ontario. In the Atikokan context, the Rentech facility that is located in Atikokan now has a contract for years out to supply biomass pellets to the Atikokan generating station.

What we now have is a piece where we've gotten out of coal, and we've created a new industry in the province. It's green, it's sustainable, it has engaged First Nations, and it's a long-term new approach to providing forestry in the province of Ontario. It's a good piece on a variety of levels.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is the Minister of Finance. Minister, the loss of a loved one is never easy. We all know that the time period after is extremely difficult for all Ontarians.

The Estate Administration Tax underwent changes this year. These changes broaden the criteria of what will be affected, shorten the amount of time that is allowed to comply with these rules to 90 days, and increase the penalties for misfiling by adding jail time of two years.

Why is your government making it more difficult for Ontarians by implementing these changes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. Certainly, the member opposite recognizes the importance of ensuring integrity in our revenues, ensuring that everyone pays their appropriate share and their fair share. That's all this is about, Mr. Speaker. We're asking people to comply with what is the law and nothing more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, what you're asking these people to do within a 90-day time period may be impossible for some, to actually get the documents. If they

don't do so, they're going to jail. That's ridiculous, Minister.

We on this side of the House hope your government isn't trying to find new ways to tax people after they die. Are you scrambling to cover your government's financial mismanagement?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite wants us to ensure that we manage appropriately the revenues and the expenses, to ensure that everything is running effectively, to look at the underground economy, to ensure that everybody pays their fair share.

We recognize that families struggle in those times, and they prepare ahead of time. There are a lot of lawyers involved. There are trust funds; there are estates. There are a number of mechanisms that are being used which actually preclude certain things from being done. Appropriately, we want to make certain that everybody abides as they should. That's all this is, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite from that party, who's asking for this to even be implemented, in terms of providing for all the measures necessary to balance the books—this is not about balancing the books. It's just about making sure everybody complies.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Acting Premier. This morning's report gives us only a glimpse of the Liberals' SAMS fiasco—at least 57 problems; defects identified on a weekly basis—yes, Deputy Premier, I'm coming to you. Staff are still overwhelmed nearly five months after SAMS started creating chaos for social assistance recipients.

Will the Acting Premier finally admit that the Liberals got us into the SAMS mess and still, months later, have no clue how to fix it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I was certainly pleased to receive the interim report from PricewaterhouseCoopers this morning and to release it publicly.

This is the interim report. We're going to be studying it very carefully. We will receive a more fulsome, comprehensive report, in its final iteration, at the end of this month.

I'm really pleased to see that they have taken a very broad look at the issues around SAMS. They're looking at planning, organizational change management, user experience, stakeholder management and communications, and the transition to operations and governance.

Some of their preliminary findings acknowledge the problems with SAMS. Of course, we, as a ministry—our project team, along with our partners, IBM—have been working literally around the clock to engage the staff and make improvements within the system.

As we look forward, we know that staff do need more support. We acknowledge that, and we will be moving forward in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Front-line staff and families on OW and ODSP can tell this government absolutely everything that they need to know about the failures of SAMS. They can tell the Liberals how SAMS has left them without money for food and rent. They can tell the Liberals how SAMS sent hundreds of private tax details and SIN numbers to the wrong people. In fact, they've been trying to tell the Liberals for over a year that SAMS has been a disaster waiting to happen.

Speaker, will the minister table the invoices for the complete cost of a report that wouldn't be needed if the Liberals actually listened to caseworkers and social assistance recipients from the very start?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As I've said in this House, I do want to acknowledge and thank all our dedicated caseworkers. I see many members here from CUPE and OPSEU. I think they're well aware that I mean it when I say that we want to work together to in fact make their lives a little more simple in terms of this particular computer system, to make it more user-friendly; and I'm actively engaged in that myself.

In terms of what the report has found, of course, are a number of findings. Some areas for improvement will make sure that all offices are adapting the way they deliver services, so that they can be supported in terms of the business functions in those offices.

We definitely know and we've learned—it's confirmed with this report—that we need to improve the dissemination of best practices across all of some 250 offices in this province.

1130

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. John Fraser: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. En cette année où nous célébrons les 400 ans de présence française en Ontario, il est important de réaliser qu'il y a plus de 1,2 million de francophones et de francophiles en Ontario. Qu'ils soient Franco-Ontariens depuis 400 ans ou Franco-Ontariens issus de l'immigration récente, tous les francophones de l'Ontario se préparent à fêter en grand cette année.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones peut nous donner un court aperçu de ce que le gouvernement fait pour les 400 ans?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, laissez-moi dire un gros merci au député d'Ottawa-Sud. Je le sais un grand francophile et il représente une grande communauté francophone.

Alors, c'est en juin 2013 que nous avons annoncé notre intention de commémorer les 400 ans de présence française en Ontario cette année. Le 25 septembre dernier, nous annonçons à Sudbury 5,9 millions de dollars pour soutenir les projets touristiques, culturels, éducationnels et patrimoniaux. Ces célébrations auront lieu surtout durant l'été, de juin à octobre. Les francophones et les francophiles invitent tous les Ontariens et les Ontariennes à venir célébrer avec nous.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

Mr. John Fraser: Merci à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones pour sa réponse, mais aussi pour son énergie inlassable en matière de francophonie. C'est très excitant de voir tout ce qui se mijote dans la francophonie ontarienne en général, mais aussi dans le cadre du 400^e anniversaire de la présence française en Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, ma question est encore pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Est-ce que la ministre pourrait partager les progrès concernant les activités de célébrations communautaires dans le cadre des 400 ans de présence française en Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: L'Office des affaires francophones a reçu de nombreuses applications de plusieurs groupes, organisations et municipalités qui partagent un grand intérêt à célébrer le 400^e anniversaire. Le triage des demandes se poursuit. Elles seront analysées sous peu, et on va annoncer ceux qui recevront du financement pour leurs projets.

Je dois dire que j'ai très, très hâte aux célébrations, que ce soit des expositions culturelles et historiques, que ce soit le festival au parc Champlain Huron-Wendat à Penetanguishene—et nous reproduirons les fêtes du 300^e qui ont eu lieu en 1921—le Festival franco-ontarien à Ottawa, la Franco-Fête à Toronto et tant d'autres célébrations.

J'ai aussi assisté tout récemment au lancement du film sur Samuel de Champlain, produit par TFO, le Rêve de Champlain, le 9 mars dernier à Ottawa, et je vous encourage tous à visionner le Rêve de Champlain produit par TFO.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Nouvelle question.

SERVICE CLUBS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, last April, I wrote to you after meeting with service clubs in my riding concerning a number of issues that are hindering their everyday operations. On February 19, my resolution on service clubs was debated and passed unanimously with all-party support in this House. The resolution stated, "the Minister of Finance should immediately move to have a standing committee investigate the legislative and regulatory barriers and burdens facing service clubs in Ontario who serve their respective communities and conduct ongoing community service which helps alleviate the demand for publicly-funded services."

Again, Minister, the resolution, as you know, received all-party support. I ask you: When are you going to strike the committee?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member opposite. I welcome the member's interest in discussing service clubs around Ontario and the impact they have on our respective communities. I recognize and value the importance and the role that the service clubs provide in our communities. The member is commended for engaging in this discussion and for looking at the issues that provide some added challenges, many of which are municipal and federal in nature.

But we would like to take the opportunity to remind the member that financial audits certainly are regulations that he has requested to review and potentially modify. We have to do that with respect to the federal government. When it comes to HST and other things for the service clubs, it's something that we're trying to work on with the federal government as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member from—I welcome Mr. Wilson's interest in this. He is to be commended. I look forward to discussing this further in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll give you a hint: the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I've been called worse.

As you know, and all members of the House I think would agree, service clubs are the backbone of our communities right across the province. With their dedication to serving so many deserving causes, their sense of community and ability to bring people together, service clubs make Ontario a better place to live and to do business. While alleviating a significant financial burden off your shoulders, Minister, and off the province's shoulders in terms of the good work that they do, they often fill the gaps that government can't do and shouldn't do.

When we got them together—hundreds of service clubs were represented, some individual clubs; some of the people that filled out my survey were responding on behalf of their region—there were a number of issues, as you said, that were federal, and I'm dealing with the federal government on those, taking your advice. You did write me a letter suggesting that. But we need a committee provincially because many more of their issues were provincial matters; some of them small, some of them big.

Make their lives better so they can help other people make their lives better.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I commend the leader of the official opposition of Ontario for the work and the consensus around this Legislative Assembly to do just that. Certainly, when it comes to issues in regard to property tax, as you know, the not-for-profit service clubs are charged at the residential rate as opposed to the commercial rate. Again, we're working with municipalities to try to make it even more effective for those service clubs that provide such a tremendous amount of work for us.

When it comes to gaming and the OLG and some of the things that you've requested in respect to that, we're working with the municipalities to look at the charity casino opportunities for them.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to striking a committee, I encourage all House leaders to put forward something and enable this to take place.

Congratulations for the work you're doing.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, I asked the Minister of Health to stop deep cuts to surgery in London, but he said he didn't

know the specifics. A week later, it's not just surgeries but thousands of hours of patient care that are being cut. London Health Sciences Centre is eliminating a staggering 97 full-time positions and St. Joseph's is cutting 24 full-time jobs. The Liberals can't say they don't know about cuts to our hospitals that put patients at risk. The real question is: Why doesn't the health minister care, and why doesn't this Liberal government care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I do remember the question from last week with regard to elective surgery. What the member opposite didn't mention at that point in time about that two-week hiatus—in many hospitals around the province, on a scheduled basis, there are closures of surgeries, of operating theatres, for a variety of reasons; this was a scheduled closure for a two-week period, which occurs from time to time. In fact, despite what the member opposite had to say last week, there were no surgeries that were cancelled. There were no surgeries that were scheduled that were cancelled. This was a measure that takes place, as I mentioned, from time to time in hospitals, with the full knowledge of the LHIN as well. It didn't impact patient care. There's no negative impact in terms of ER or other services, and I'm happy to address the other issue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Acting Premier: Hospitals across the province are laying off front-line nurses and staff because of the Liberal budget cuts. At Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, 45 layoff notices were sent to staff. That announcement came today. That's on top of the 33 layoffs at Cambridge Memorial Hospital last month.

No one believes the spin that front-line job cuts in our hospitals don't hurt patients. Families know that fewer nurses and hospital staff mean one thing: Patients will wait even longer for the care that they need.

1140

When will the Liberals stop these reckless cuts to our hospitals, stop the layoffs in Kitchener and Waterloo and across the province, and stop putting patient care at risk?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think the member opposite knows that layoff notices do not equal layoffs. In many cases, in fact, around the province, from time to time, there are shifts in programs and services. Often there are vacant positions that haven't been filled previously, and those positions are removed so that services can be provided elsewhere within a hospital.

In fact, when layoffs are required for certain programs, often the individuals working in those positions are in fact deployed, as is required, because of representative rights and the union representatives—the model that has been created is that that layoff is required to transfer that individual to another area of the hospital.

But the member opposite does know that we have 24,000 more nurses working in this province than we did approximately a year ago. We have 5,000 more physicians working in the province over the same period of

time. We've increased our funding to hospitals across the province by roughly 50% in the last decade as well.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Pickering-Ajax.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ajax-Pickering.

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Interjection: Don't challenge the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess I've been told.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I know that Ontario's publicly funded education system is recognized as one of the best in the world. I'm extremely proud of our accomplishments, as our success has been based on the talent, dedication and hard work of our education community. I know that we are investing in education to ensure that our students continue to achieve excellence, and we have a lot to be proud of, in terms of student achievement.

Just today, both you and the Premier announced that more students are graduating than ever before. This is incredible news. Minister, can you please tell us how our government is helping students graduate with the skills they need to succeed in today's global competitive world?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Ajax-Pickering, although I must admit it was a little hard to hear him over here. But I do think, from what I could hear, that the member is absolutely correct that more students are graduating than ever before.

When we came into office in 2003, only 68% of students were graduating from high school within five years. Today, we announced that 84% of students received their high school diplomas. That's great news. For those of you who weren't quick on the math, that's a 16-percentage-point increase in the graduation rate in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Liz Sandals: That means that 163,000 more students—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please. Wrap up—one sentence.

Hon. Liz Sandals: That means that 163,000 more students have graduated than would have if we hadn't increased the grad rate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I might come to the member from Ajax-Pickering on a supplementary, but—no, I think I will.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You are correct both ways, Mr. Speaker, as always.

Thank you, Minister. I know constituents in my riding are pleased to hear that more students than ever are graduating. I know our government continues to invest in schools, and the high graduation rate demonstrates that our government's Student Success Strategy is working.

Minister, this means that our graduation rate is now just one percentage point away from the government's goal of 85% of students graduating. Can you please tell us what steps our government will take to ensure we reach our important goal of 85% of students graduating?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Over the past 10 years, our Student Success Strategy has provided support and resources for students and ensured all high school students have access to learning opportunities that match their future aspirations.

For example, our Specialist High Skills Major program allows 44,000 students to focus on knowledge and skills in various economic sectors. Our Dual Credit Programs have allowed 22,000 students to earn up to four credits that count towards both their high school diploma and a college diploma, degree or apprenticeship.

We've worked very hard to make sure that Ontario students have the chance to develop their strengths, their interests and their goals during their school experience, and we will continue to ensure that students are graduating with the knowledge and skills they need to reach their full potential.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to welcome Mary Anne and Jim Batte to Queen's Park. They made the trek to Toronto from my riding; they're good friends and neighbours of ours from the Formosa, Teeswater and Belmore area.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wish to correct my record: On March 26, I referred to the Herzig Eye Institute as an independent health facility; they are not.

VISITEUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa—Orléans on a point of order.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait grand plaisir de présenter Andrée-Anne Martel qui est ici de l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario. Elle est ici pour une présentation au caucus de la francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think everyone in the Legislature knows that we are 100 days away today from the official start of the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. I just want to make sure—though I know every member of the House would be aware that the Pan Am/Parapan Am medals are actually here in the Legislature today. I'm sure many have already been to see them, but for those who haven't, they are on display until 1:30 today in committee room 228.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a number of introductions today: Mr. Muhammad Masood Alam, the 2015 award winner for the Agnes Macphail Award; Mr. Geoff Kettel, the 2008 Agnes Macphail winner; Tim Progosh, who is a representative of the Canadian Comedy Hall of Fame; Shamsul Mukhtadir, who is the president of Crescent Town Community Inc.; and Brian Dunstan, who is here as a good friend. Two of the five are here, anyway; they will be here shortly. Good to see you here. Thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Further introductions? Last call for introductions. The member for Ajax-Pickering, for an introduction or are you just waving to me?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce my wife, Donna, who is not yet in the gallery. It's very unusual that she would ever be late, but traffic must have been busy—

Interjection: She's coming in.

Interjection: There she is.

Applause.

Mr. Joe Dickson: The Speaker once told me, sir, that timing is everything. Thank you to my beautiful wife, Donna.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Is that the best wife he ever had?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I really enjoy my afternoons.

Introduction of guests? Last call for introduction of guests.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MICHAEL PICHE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to focus on a story of heroism from my riding. Local news reports have chronicled the rescue of a man and his dog last week from the icy Ottawa River in Mattawa by OPP constable Michael Piche. Roch Halle had gone out to try to rescue his seven-year-old Irish setter Zoe, who'd gotten stuck in the ice. The ice gave way, and he spent 10 minutes trapped in the frigid waters before Constable Piche, who was on patrol nearby, heard his cries for help, crawled out on his stomach and pulled both the man and his dog to safety, shortly after going through the ice himself up to his waist.

It must be noted that this isn't the first rescue that involves Constable Piche. In December 2011, he was credited with rescuing a woman from drowning in the same Mattawa River. In 2012, Constable Piche was awarded a Diamond Jubilee medal by our MP, Jay Aspin,

for the constable's service to the community, which now spans some 17 years.

Courageous acts deserve to be recognized in this Legislature, and that's why it is important to bring the story of Constable Michael Piche to you today.

RAIL SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I would like to talk about the two train derailments that occurred in and near Gogama, in my riding. The first was on February 14, the second on March 7. CN has released more than 25 updates since then. On the government side, there are zero public reports available, despite the fact that life for the people of Gogama and the surrounding area has changed for generations to come.

The government has a responsibility to protect its citizens, and they do this in part by using their full power to prosecute offenders until they learn, until they change their ways and realize that there cannot be a next time. There have to be huge consequences to these repeated derailments, or they are going to keep happening.

I am convinced that if this derailment, those explosions, that fire, that spill of toxic bitumen had happened in southern Ontario, things would have been different. To start, the Premier would have come to see the residents, and a full prevention plan would be in development. Hundreds of government lawyers would be preparing litigation.

The people in Mattagami First Nation are important to me. Come and see what happened. Come and meet them. See the scarred landscape. See the environmental destruction, and you will understand the need for government action.

MUHAMMAD MASOOD ALAM

Mr. Arthur Potts: On Tuesday, March 24, the 22nd annual Agnes Macphail Award ceremony was held at East York Civic Centre. Agnes Macphail, as we all know, was the first woman elected to the House of Commons, and then at 43 she was elected as MPP, representing the riding of York East, an area that includes Beaches—East York, making her one of the first women in the provincial assembly.

As evidenced here today, many women have followed her. Agnes was a strong defender of women's rights and supported the passage of Ontario's first equal pay legislation. She's also known as a strong promoter of social justice, coining the expression, "Think globally but act locally."

The award we have from Agnes Macphail was first started in 1994 and is given out to a resident of East York who exemplifies her leadership. This year I had the honour of sitting in on the selection committee and voting for this year's winner, Mr. Muhammad Masood Alam, who joins us in the House today.

Applause.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you. Mr. Alam is from Karachi, Pakistan, where he was taught by his father

from a young age to always give back to the community. Masood and his wife continue to pass on his father's message. His list of volunteer work in East York is exemplary. He has been a leader in strongly advocating against family violence. He educates the vulnerable and less fortunate to access resources. He initiated a program called Rabita that is designed to promote anti-bullying and promote healthy living in the neighbourhood. And he's involved with the Toronto police community crisis response program.

Mr. Alam has been quoted as saying, "In Canada, I found a lot of opportunities to volunteer my time for those that don't have enough opportunities." I commend Mr. Alam for his positive attitude. We all know people like Masood who make our communities great.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in thanking Masood Alam for all he has done and continues to do to make this community a better place. He's a very deserving winner of the 2015 Agnes Macphail Award. Thank you, Masood.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome and thank our guest.

MINOR HOCKEY

Ms. Laurie Scott: There is no doubt that my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock produces great hockey talent. As the 2014-15 hockey season comes to a close, I would like to take a moment and congratulate a few teams on their very successful seasons.

On Saturday, March 21, the Mariposa Lightning won the all-Ontario Pee wee C championship in Little Britain. Led by coach Trevor Rogers and assistant coach Robert Jenkins, the Lightning won 4-3 in a close game against the Six Nations Blackhawks. Congratulations to the whole team on their big win.

This past Saturday in Minden, the Highland Storm Pee wee boys won the Ontario Minor Hockey Association championship. The Storm made a triumphant comeback to beat Ingersoll 4-2, scoring four unanswered goals in the third period. I would like to congratulate head coach Jason Morissette and the whole team on their win and successful season.

Finally, not to be outdone, the Highland Storm Midget girls won a title of their own. They took home the gold in the Lower Lakes Female Hockey League championships in a 1-0 win over the Flamborough Flames. Congratulations to coach Dan Marsden and all the girls on this fantastic win.

PAKISTAN DAY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Windsor is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the most multicultural country on earth. We all take pride in the achievement we have made as Canadians and as Ontarians.

Multiculturalism is embedded in the fabric of Canada and Ontario. It is enshrined in the charter, in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and in Ontario in the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act.

Immigrants from many different parts of the world have settled in Windsor and made it their home. Each community joins the family of Canadians and adds to our nation the rich traditions of their country of origin and enhances our proudly diverse community in Windsor.

This past weekend, the fourth annual flag-raising ceremony held to commemorate Pakistan Day, a public holiday held on March 23 in Pakistan each year, took place in my riding of Windsor West. The Pakistan community in Windsor, going back to the 1960s and before, has done its part in enhancing the wonderful, vibrant and diverse face our city presents to Ontario, to Canada and to the world. Now hundreds of families from Pakistan proudly call Windsor their home.

The Windsor celebration is a chance to promote the Pakistani culture and heritage to Canadian-born Pakistani children, as dozens of children ran around waving Pakistani flags and took part in singing their parents' homeland's national anthem, as well as the Canadian national anthem. They should be proud of their heritage and their valued place in Canadian society. Today I am honoured to extend my congratulations to everyone from Windsor's Pakistani community.

1510

HOLY WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further members' statements? The member from—

Mr. Joe Dickson: Whatever you say is correct, Mr. Speaker.

Like everyone in this House, I annually honour all places of worship, whether they are Tamil, Muslim, Hindu or Jewish observances, just to name a few, including ceremonies of Thai Pongal, Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr—which marks the end of Ramadan—Holi, Diwali, Yom Kippur, Passover and Rosh Hashanah.

However, this week, which has commenced with Palm Sunday, is Holy Week worldwide. Over 2.18 billion Christians this weekend will celebrate the most important observances of our Christian faith: Good Friday on April 3 and Easter Sunday on April 5. Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his death at Calgary—Western Canada will love that—at Calvary, with mother Mary at his feet as he died.

Good Friday represents the sacrifices and sufferings in Jesus's life and the selfless acts from a man free from sin to save those full of sin. They also placed a crown of thorns on his head, causing further pain and suffering, also piercing his side with a lance, ensuring his death.

The crucifixion was the culmination of a number of events in Holy Week, including the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, two days following the crucifixion, and his ascension into heaven 40 days later. Easter Sunday is the celebration of our Lord rising from the dead and proving once and for all that he is the son of God.

Holy Week, including the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is observed throughout the Christian world, and Catholics in Ontario alone will pray in some 30 languages this Easter weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. God bless you.

EUGENE GEORGE

Mr. Michael Harris: It's with deepest sadness that I stand to join those across Waterloo region mourning the passing of local icon Mr. Eugene George. A dedicated man who committed himself to growing and strengthening his community, Kitchener Rangers club founder and first president Eugene George sadly left us last night after a battle with cancer.

Those who knew him will tell you that while community filled his heart, Eugene's passion was hockey, a passion that saw him bring the New York Rangers to Kitchener in 1963. Once accomplished, Mr. George established community ownership, a vision providing the foundation of the Kitchener Rangers organization ever since.

When he wasn't talking, working or playing hockey, he was busy, always busy. As the founder of G&A Masonry, a business he grew from Breslau right across North America over more than 60 years, Eugene became the first president of the Canadian and Ontario Masonry Contractors' Association and the first Canadian president of the Mason Contractors Association of America.

Speaker, this was a man who embraced his work to the point that it was his hobby, a hobby he dedicated himself to 24/7. I remember receiving calls from Eugene on a Sunday morning. I would phone him back expecting to leave a message and connect with him on Monday, but he was there, Eugene, on a Sunday afternoon, doing what he enjoyed most: working in the office alongside his boys.

In fact, he was still in that same office as recently as Monday. In one of those calls last year he told me how he had broken his shin playing hockey, trying to clear traffic in front of the net at the ripe age of over 80. Days later, he was still complaining about those guys jamming the crease.

I ask those in the Legislature and across our province today to join in recognizing the passing of Mr. Eugene George.

AGINCOURT COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize a school in my riding, Agincourt Collegiate Institute, the oldest high school in Scarborough, has a long history of excellent music programs, and they had impressive results at this year's music competitions.

At the 2015 Kiwanis festival, ACI received awards in all categories, taking home seven awards for first place, five for second place and one for third place. At the GTA Jazz Festival, ACI received two gold and two silver awards. And both the ACI wind symphony and wind ensemble received gold medals at the Ontario Band Association festival.

I wish ACI students the best of luck in their upcoming competitions at the Ontario Vocal Festival and MusicFest nationals.

Mr. Speaker, music programs stimulate students' creativity and enhance their personal, social and educational development.

I'd like to thank the principal, Roy Hu; the head of the music program, David Lum; the music parent council; and other teachers and staff for supporting the development of young musicians in Scarborough-Agincourt.

FIFA WOMEN'S
WORLD CUP TROPHY TOURTOURNÉE DU TROPHÉE
DE LA COUPE DU MONDE FÉMININE
DE LA FIFA

Mr. John Fraser: This summer, Canada will be welcoming some of the best soccer players from around the world for the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Cet été, le Canada accueillera les meilleures joueuses de soccer du monde entier pour la Coupe du Monde Féminine de la FIFA 2015.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to host teams from 24 countries that will compete for one of sport's most desired trophies.

In the coming months leading up to the tournament, FIFA and Coca-Cola Canada will be taking the Women's World Cup trophy on a 12-stop tour across the country. The trophy tour, which begins today in my hometown of Ottawa, will give Ontarians a chance to get up close and personal with the Women's World Cup in cities like Kingston, Toronto and Hamilton.

The first ever FIFA Women's World Cup Trophy Tour is a great opportunity to learn more about Canada's number one participation sport and to recognize our high-performance athletes.

The tour also represents a great opportunity to celebrate the important role that sports play in our lifestyle and wellness.

As the parliamentary assistant to health, I recognize the power that sport has to inspire our communities, and especially our young people, to become more active.

Monsieur le Président, j'encourage tout le monde à participer à l'un des événements qui commencent aujourd'hui jusqu'au 31 mai, et à encourager l'équipe de soccer du Canada cet été.

I encourage everyone to get out to one of the 12 trophy stops being held until May 31 and to cheer on Canada's women's soccer team to victory this summer.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive DSPT International (Canada) Inc.

Bill Pr16, An Act to revive 990046 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr17, An Act to revive 731149 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 2015 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Soo Wong: Yes, I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted pre-budget consultations from January 20 to January 30 this past winter. Public hearings were held in Fort Frances, Sudbury, Ottawa, Cornwall, Fort Erie and London, and included two days in Toronto at the Legislative Assembly. The committee heard from 168 witnesses and received some 155 written submissions from agencies, associations, community groups, local administrative bodies, municipalities, organizations, transfer payment partners, unions and individuals. On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank each and every one of them for taking part to share their views with the committee.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee and the committee staff for their commitment, hard work and co-operation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today I am pleased to stand in the House to raise awareness for the International Day of Pink, which is next Wednesday, April 8.

As members of this Legislature know, the International Day of Pink was started when a young man in ninth grade was bullied for wearing a pink shirt in a Nova Scotia high school. But two students took action by buying pink shirts and handing them out to friends to wear to school. To their surprise, hundreds of students wore pink to show support for the bullied student. By doing so, they stood up against bullying and showed that it was unacceptable in their school.

Today, I want to recognize schools across Ontario that are taking steps to raise awareness of the impact of

bullying and are promoting safe, inclusive and accepting environments in our schools every day. I especially want to thank all of our young people who will organize Pink Shirt Days in their schools across Ontario next Wednesday. Together, we are part of one voice that says we will not accept bullying, harassment, discrimination or hatred in our schools or in our society.

In particular, I want to recognize and thank the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity—which was formerly known as Jer's Vision—Egale, Kids Help Phone, and many other organizations for leading the way on bullying prevention initiatives across Ontario and Canada.

Speaker, while we have taken important steps to prevent and address bullying in our schools, we know that there are still too many students who feel unsafe and unwelcome. Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning are often the targets of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia at school. Sadly, we all know the tragic impact that this can have.

For our students to do well in school, they must feel safe and accepted. For this reason, I am proud that our government has been a leader in bullying prevention and intervention. We led the way by developing robust legislation, such as the Accepting Schools Act, and by developing resources for school boards that address bullying and victimization through prevention, intervention, and support.

The Accepting Schools Act, introduced in 2012, was the first of its kind in Canada. The act provides a definition of bullying and cyberbullying and requires school boards to take measures to prevent and address inappropriate student behaviour.

Putting an end to bullying cannot be done by one person alone. It is the responsibility of everyone in the school community to ensure that our schools are safe, inclusive and accepting for all. That's why it is important that our schools work with parents, students and staff in developing policies to prevent bullying in our schools and classrooms.

As a complement to our efforts on accepting schools, our government has also expanded supports for children and youth with mental health issues. We know that often those are related to being the victim of bullying.

We have added resources for educators to support students' mental health and promote well-being as part of Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

We're also continuing our partnership with Kids Help Phone so that our young people can have access to 24/7 telephone and Web-based professional counselling services.

And, Speaker, just last month, our government took further steps towards ending bullying by releasing the revised, up-to-date health and physical education curriculum. We needed to update our curriculum so that students understand the importance of things like healthy relationships; having the confidence to say no; safe use of technology and the Internet to help eliminate cyber-

bullying; developing inclusive communities; and learning about mental health.

It is the responsibility of everyone to speak out against bullying. Inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, cyberbullying, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia, transphobia and biphobia is unacceptable. We must continue to work together to promote the health and well-being of our students and ensure that they continue to learn in a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment.

In closing, I hope that all members will recognize the International Day of Pink next Wednesday and show their support by wearing something pink. Together we can help foster a culture of safety, acceptance and inclusiveness in our schools and in our society.

Now, Speaker, I happen to know that my critic the member from Simcoe North has on a very good bullying prevention T-shirt today. I also know that usually we do not allow people to wear slogans in the Legislature, but this is such an appropriate T-shirt for what he is about to do that I would like to move unanimous consent that the member from Simcoe North be allowed to remove his jacket so we can all see his T-shirt.

Interjections: Take it off!

Hon. Liz Sandals: Not take the T-shirt off! Take the jacket off!

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education is seeking unanimous consent for the member from Simcoe North to disrobe.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Partially. Partially.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Partially? Partially. Just give me a da-da-da-da moment, please. Don't interject.

Agreed? Agreed. I thank the minister.

I must continue my trend. Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries. It is now—

Hon. Liz Sandals: We want to see your T-shirt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He was given permission. It didn't say he had to.

It is now time for responses. The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I am responding. I'll take it off in a minute.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay, I'll take it off right now. Okay?

Applause.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much for an opportunity to respond to the Minister of Education on the International Day of Pink. I think it's really important that I make a few comments on what has happened in the riding of Simcoe North.

Immediately after the International Day of Pink was mentioned, and we had the young fellow from Nova Scotia and those comments were made, a number of things happened in the riding of Simcoe North. We have a group called the Orillia Youth Centre, that's run by a gentleman named Kevin Gangloff. It's operated by the city of Orillia and, in fact, for years now they have been

concerned about bullying in society, so they've taken a leadership role in our community.

A gentleman came along named Ross McIntyre. He's another person working in the city of Orillia, and he decided to create this theme. It's called "Stand Up! Orillia Against Bullying." What he did is, he came to—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: What am I doing this for, anyways?

He came to different supporters of that, supporters of the youth centre, and asked us all to buy pink T-shirts through our organization. I think each year now, for about five years, each different supporter has bought about 300 shirts each year, and we distribute them to kids in the elementary school, the secondary school, the Lakehead campus in Orillia and also to Georgian College. Georgian College is also a sponsor of this program.

It has gone over very well, to the point where we've also got different people, Mr. Speaker—for example, a couple of years back, Arlo Guthrie came to town to speak at the Mariposa Folk Festival. He came and made sure that he spoke to the group about bullying and how he'd seen it in society. He asked questions, and got a lot of media attention with all the different TV stations in the area, because he was playing at the Mariposa Folk Festival.

Last fall we had Chuck Panozzo. He's the original founder of the rock group Styx. Charles is not a healthy man today. He has had cancer and has HIV. He was bullied as a child, and thank God he had an older brother who protected him in high school. He was ready to go into a teaching career, and just about the time he was supposed to start his first job, he decided he was going to start a rock band. It was a very successful rock band. Styx has played around the world for 25 or 30 years now.

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He came to the youth centre in Orillia as well. It was arranged by a gentleman named Marc Cohen, from Orillia. He spoke to the kids all around the community and drew a huge crowd. That night, the band played; they put on a phenomenal performance. We were allowed to go backstage with the band and had our picture taken and all that sort of thing. On the stage, he wore this T-shirt: "Stand Up! Orillia Against Bullying." I think that's a phenomenal thing that he did. I think that the Orillia group has done remarkable work throughout the years, and I wanted to give them special attention today. I thought I'd wear this to the photo op, but I missed the photo op. I didn't know the minister would ask me for sure to do a unanimous consent motion to remove my jacket—and that's nice.

Also, I want to say, because I've got a minute left, that the bullying aspect is one of the reasons, as education critic, that I tried to work with my caucus to convince them to work with the health and physical education curriculum changes, and mainly the sex education curriculum, because there is bullying: the transgender bullying, the gay and lesbian bullying, the cyberbullying, the Internet luring. With these things, it's not just about

what a teacher teaches the kids about sexuality; it's about all the things leading up to the fact that you do not want young men and women to be into this case where they're bullying someone else.

I think that as children most of us have probably bullied someone or been bullied ourselves. But if we can stop it at a very early age, even today, it will protect many, many people into the future.

I'm a strong supporter of international pink shirt day. I applaud and thank the minister for her comments.

By the way, my name is on the back of this shirt. It's actually: Garfield Dunlop, MPP, Georgian College and a skateboard park.

The reality is that we all support it and we support anti-bullying day and we support international pink shirt day. Thank you very much for the opportunity today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The member from Simcoe North is a tough act to follow.

It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the New Democratic caucus and speak to the International Day of Pink this year. By standing up to bullying and discrimination today, we are working towards a more accepting Ontario tomorrow. I think the popularity of the Day of Pink speaks volumes to its success and the hard work of organizers, activists and communities across the province. I want to thank everyone who has organized an event next week for all of their efforts. Organizations like Jer's Vision, Egale, Queer Ontario and the Trans Lobby Group are leaders in the fight against homophobia, sexism, racism, transphobia and discrimination in all its forms.

The fight against bullying and discrimination is no easy task and there is no one target. Indeed, it is an effort to change what's accepted and seen as normal in society, rather than trying to change someone to fit into society constructed norms. We need to challenge anything and everything that asks us to change who we are to appease others' expectations of us. This cannot be more true than when we are talking about Ontarians who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer.

To this day, there are discriminatory practices in this province that would shock the conscience of most Ontarians. So-called conversion therapy is one such practice. Conversion or reparative therapy is based on medically discredited practices adhering to the distorted belief that you can prevent youth from being LGBTQ. Right now there are medical professionals in this province who are charging OHIP to practise this therapy on youth for what they see as a treatment for a mental illness. The twisted beliefs of a few doctors and counsellors who think they can "fix" LGBTQ youth perpetuate discrimination against these individuals. To quote Ohio trans teen Leelah Alcorn, who experienced a level of discrimination so severe that it resulted in her suicide, "Fix society. Please."

Recently the Canadian Mental Health Association found that 20% of trans respondents have experienced physical or sexual assaults and 34% were subject to

verbal threats or harassment. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they contemplated suicide and 45% had attempted suicide at some point.

New Democrats will not stand for the medical quackery that is conversion therapy, and my colleague from Parkdale-High Park has pioneered legislation to stop this practice. Bill 77 seeks to ensure health professionals reject any attempts to prevent a youth from being LGBTQ. It also affirms the right of youth to self-identify. I hope that all members of this chamber understand that an option to complain to the CPSO is insufficient in combatting discrimination against LGBTQ youth.

We need Bill 77 to be enacted into law. Already, as a result of this bill and the tireless efforts of LGBTQ activists, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has launched a complete review of their treatment of trans youth. This bill has secured tremendous support from medical professionals and their accredited organizations. Jake Pyne of McMaster University stated that the member from Parkdale-High Park is sending a strong message to health and mental health practitioners in this province. The Canadian Psychological Association affirms that all adolescent and adult persons have the right to define their gender identity, regardless of chromosomal sex, genitalia, assigned birth sex or initial gender role.

Speaker, it's fitting that Bill 77 is up for debate tomorrow, followed by the International Day of Pink next week. I hope that this government will follow the lead of activists working with New Democrats to advocate for LGBTQ youth and support this bill. With all of the great strides that the Day of Pink has made in the fight against discrimination, I hope the passing of this bill will be the next positive step forward to building acceptance throughout the province.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease

consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name to it and give it to page Kari.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition named "Ontario Is Not For Sale."

"Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

"Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of" good-paying "Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

"Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hard-working Ontarians who are building this province; and

"Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to page Marin to bring to the Clerk.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as 'an extra payment covered by ratepayers over and above the actual market price of electricity'; and

"Whereas wind power is simply unreliable, blows mostly at night when we don't need power, creating a surplus Ontario then has to get rid of by paying Quebec and the United States to take it, and the total cost of producing the exported power was about \$2.6 billion more than the revenue Ontario received from exporting that power between 2006 and 2013; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has risen from \$700 million prior to the Green Energy Act to \$7.7 billion by 2013, and over the past decade, the cumulated amount is about \$50 billion; and

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"Whereas Ontario now has the highest industrial rates in North America, and residential hydro bills are forecast to increase" by a further "42% by 2018 after peak hydro rates have already more than tripled since 2003; and

"Whereas local First Nations, property owners and aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders have voiced concerns about wind farm installations proposed by Innergex in Merrick and Mattawan townships in the riding of Nipissing;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on these proposed wind projects and the government's expensive energy policy by cancelling feed-in-tariff ... subsidies, implementing an immediate moratorium on wind power development, and giving municipalities veto authority over wind projects in their communities."

I wholeheartedly agree with all the hundreds of these and hand it to page Max.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Stefan Skogberg from Copper Cliff, in the riding of Sudbury. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Emma to bring it to the Clerk.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: I wish to present a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I attach my signature to it, and I will pass it to Jessie.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 per household more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas this uncompetitive tax will not impact business outside Ontario and will only serve to accelerate the demise of our once strong manufacturing sector; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I agree with this and will be passing it to page Thomas.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas by 2017, close to one third of Ontario's population will be made up of peoples of colour and First Peoples; and

"Whereas racialized communities are overrepresented when it comes to issues of income inequality, un(der)employment and precarious employment; and

"Whereas the Ontario government used to have an Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat to address persistent racial inequalities and inequities in the province; and

"Whereas there currently does not exist a dedicated section or division that provides focus for government action on issues of concern to racialized people in this province; and

"Whereas the Colour of Poverty/Colour of Change Network, the Racism Free Ontario campaign by Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), and other like-minded groups are working to create broader public awareness so that Ontarians accept and acknowledge that racism (systemic, structural, institutional, interpersonal and individualized) is still alive in our province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, to also initiate a task force to address racism in Ontario and incorporate an anti-racism framework in the development of government policy, and to do so with comprehensive community engagement so as to develop practical and sustainable solutions to redressing all forms of systemic and interpersonal racism."

I sign this petition and give it to page Joe to deliver.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Charlene Bradley in my riding, in Hanmer. It goes as follows:

"Whereas the NDP MPP for Timiskaming-Cochrane, John Vanthof, has introduced Bill 46 in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario so that UTVs (utility task vehicles) would be treated like all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) by the Highway Traffic Act;

"Whereas this bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect to UTVs was introduced on November 24, 2014;

"Whereas this bill will have positive economic impact on clubs, manufacturers, dealers and rental shops and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To vote in favour of MPP Vanthof's Bill 46 to allow UTVs the same access as ATVs in the Highway Traffic Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Connor to bring it to the Clerk.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas accessibility to our public health care system is a foundational value of Ontario; and

"Whereas all individuals should have equal access to health care services regardless of their ability to pay; and

"Whereas patients requiring health care services often have to drive to a hospital to receive these services; and

"Whereas hospitals are increasingly using parking charges as an avenue for revenue generation thereby impacting some patients' access based on their ability to pay; and

"Whereas the Liberal Party promised during the 2014 election campaign to cap hospital parking fees;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario follow through on the commitment to cap parking fees at Ontario's hospitals at a level that ensures equitable access to health care."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to give it to page Natasha to bring to the Clerk.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired that have no known cause or cure;

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges and there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I agree with this, sign my name to it and give it to page Japneet.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Anne-Marie MacInnis, the president of Unifor Mine Mill Local 598, and it reads as follows:

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"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services," such as cleaning, "and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including in-patient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care and the emergency department; and

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services;

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Cynthia to bring it to the Clerk.

OSTOMY SUPPLIES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the \$600 ADP ostomy grant has not been revised in a decade;

"Whereas Ontarians who require ostomy supplies are facing increased supplies costs that significantly affect their ability to pay for basic needs such as food and shelter;

"Whereas all Ontarians deserve to receive the care and supplies required to maintain their independence and quality of life,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To increase the ostomy supply grant under the Assistive Devices Program to appropriately reflect the increased costs of ostomy supplies for patients."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Rahul.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: If I could introduce a member sitting in the gallery here: He's a local Catholic school trustee, Frank D'Amico. He's also a member of the Toronto Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery reserves. I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION
PLANS ACT, 2015LOI DE 2015 SUR LES RÉGIMES
DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe the last time this was discussed, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo had the floor. Member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to continue the debate my colleague from Oshawa had started on Tuesday. This is an important debate for this House to be having, because it does speak to the priorities and the economy of this province.

I'm going to be talking a little bit about why defined benefits are actually the preferred model around pensions. I'm going to be referring mostly from the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan report. They put out a report this month—on March 17, actually—called Retirement Income Crisis: Inevitable or Avoidable?—The Economic Reality. This research study is actually something that the government should be paying very close attention to in light of them sort of fast-tracking Bill 57, which is the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act of 2014, originally.

The reason I want to address this is because it speaks to the importance of designing pension plans that will actually meet the goals that we all want. I think that we all share the goals of seeing a pension plan which will guarantee a certain level of quality of life, a certain level of income, as people retire, because there is growing consensus in this province and in this country that people obviously have not had the vehicles or the tools to save. Clearly, in light of an economy where we in Ontario have the highest youth unemployment rate in Canada, this is a huge wakeup call, I think, for the majority of people.

But we did meet with the president of HOOPP—his name is Jim Keohane—and this white paper actually serves as a guide, I think. It's quite a contrast, though, to the TD report that came out yesterday, the TD economic report affirming the government's position on public-private partnerships. I know that it's shocking for the majority of people in this province to hear that a bank is actually confirming that they really like that \$6.5 billion in financing that comes with the alternative financing procurement process that the Auditor General of this province raised the alarm about, just before Christmas. That \$6.5 billion that's contained in her report—no one is disputing that. Those are the credit card rates that this government engages in, in order to fund infrastructure.

Just think what we could do with that \$6.5 billion. The \$8 billion is the more popular number, but the \$6.5 billion is indisputable. Nobody is challenging that.

It's not surprising, though, that the Toronto-Dominion Bank came out yesterday with this report and it just happens to reaffirm this government's position.

The banks are happy. The banks are doing fine. You know who's not doing fine? The majority of lower- and middle-income Ontarians in this province, who obviously are having a hard time finding good jobs in this economy and are certainly having a very difficult time even planning to save for the future.

The white paper that HOOPP put out, as I said, is called Retirement Income Crisis: Inevitable or Avoidable? They summarize two studies that approach the economic reality of retirement from two different perspectives.

I really do hope that whoever is writing the framework for this government on Bill 57—and Bill 56, for that matter—is listening very carefully.

In the Boston Consulting Group's study on defined benefit pension plans, they confirm that these plans "play a significant role in powering economies, supporting growth and creating confident consumers whose spending is vital to the health of our economies. Of equal note is the research conducted by the Gandalf Group which found that the majority of Ontarians (86%) agree there is an emerging retirement income crisis in Canada.

"The findings are clear. In Ontario alone, approximately 1.3 million defined pensioners inject an estimated \$27 billion back into the economy, with this impact most keenly felt in smaller communities where there is greater reliance on the predictable and secure retirement income offered through the" defined "pension model."

I want the members in the House to pay really close attention to that because the evidence, the research, points to the fact that those smaller communities, those rural communities, our northern communities benefit even more. They're more reliant on a strong pension plan, and it has a greater and positive impact on those local economies. I think that's something we haven't yet talked about in this House.

With this research, I think that this House, this Legislature, has an opportunity to better understand the economic realities for those with a defined pension and for those without—we should talking about that—and for Ontarians as a whole. I believe defined pension plans provide the most effective and efficient way to deliver retirement security.

It's important that the pension reform debate focuses on the most serious issue, which is ensuring solutions are found that provide retirement income adequacy for all Ontarians. Bill 57 does not do that, because with Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, there is no defined benefit at the end of the day. It's completely dependent on the market. Of course, the management fees carve out of the pension benefit, especially at the end of it.

I firmly believe, of course, that research should guide public policy. We should be looking at and listening to

the voices in this sector who have the experience to help design a plan going forward for this government.

I think it is significant, of course, that this government has brought Bill 57 first and foremost, and it seems to be the priority, because the much-talked-about made-in-Ontario option is not coming forward for years now. I think we have some consensus, so why not design the best model now?

HOOPP came and they did a presentation. I think it's really important when organizations who have direct experience in this field come to Queen's Park, expend the energy and share their knowledge. That benefits us as members, because sometimes we get into this stage where if we just paid attention to the voices in this House, we would be in a lot of trouble, and we would design policies and legislation which actually go off the tracks.

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HOOPP actually had this report. They indicated that the percentage of the labour force covered by defined benefit plans dropped from 39% to 29% by the time we reached 2010. Most of the drop was in the private sector, which is really interesting. Therefore, that's why you have this tension between those who have pensions and those who do not. And I think that this could commonly be called—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pension tension.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's pension envy, but there is tension there; I'll give you that.

This report is really relevant today, because the report is on converting public sector defined benefits to defined contributions: *The Experience So Far and Implications*. There is this concern that governments south of the border and across the country, and obviously here in Ontario with this debate—the focus is moving to the defined contribution model, which has a lot of weaknesses, I know, and it's a concern for us.

Defined contribution plans are more expensive for the same level of benefits as defined benefit plans—this is the summary of the findings—and the main cause is the level of net investment returns, but also high admin costs, and I think the member from Oshawa really did drive that home. I use the example that if one of the plans is showing a 5% growth and 3% of that is management fees and 2% of that is inflation, the positive net gain is negligible at best. So why go down that road, Mr. Speaker? The switch to defined contributions would mean higher contributions from employers, taxpayers and employees. We have some examples of plans that actually can be designed to be more beneficial to the pensioner.

To convert public sector defined benefits to defined contributions—HOOPP describes this as a lose-lose. They describe it as lose-lose because investments move to shorter-term, more liquid assets that earn lower returns. This is basic Finance 101. Legacy liabilities would be around for 70 or more years even with a hard freeze. For the model, a \$10-billion public sector defined benefit plan, costs to governments would rise 38%. It could be met with a one-time payment into the plan of

\$3.29 billion. This is a de-risking of the plan. This is what leadership is: actually designing the best plan at the beginning, not picking up the pieces at the end of it.

I think it's worth noting that HOOPP, on March 4, 2015, had a 17.71% return for their members. That's not too shabby, Mr. Speaker. That's because they can control their costs, because they have the right expertise in investing, and those management fees are not carving out the benefits at the end of the day.

There's obviously room for improvement. I can talk at length about the flaws of Bill 57 and, quite honestly, why we're not going to be supporting this piece of legislation.

Pooled registered pension plans are supposed to be very large funds designed to keep fees low, but the legislation leaves the setting of acceptable fees to regulation. Obviously, there are some trust issues on that front. The CPP Investment Board, like large provincial public sector workplace pension plans, the defined benefit plans I've been talking about, has managed to keep administration costs very low. This makes them a better sponsor than the insurance industry and the banks for a retirement savings vehicle.

The second flaw is that there are no employer obligations to contribute to PRPPs. Workers are pretty much on their own in terms of contributions. If you're paying attention to the financial reality of the people in this province, they are struggling to make ends meet. The expendable income at the end of the day, especially with increasing hydro rates—even the renters, those people are who in a situation where they have to rent or sometimes they choose to rent—their rent keeps going up. The cost of living keeps going up, the cost of energy keeps going up, and their wages are stagnant in the face of inflation. Expendable income, solely on the part of the individual—and not recognizing that planning for a healthy future actually is a shared responsibility and that government can and should play a responsible role in that—is pretty much ignored in Bill 57.

Thirdly, there is no defined or even target benefit with PRPPs. Workers end up with whatever the market returns on their cumulative contributions when they retire. So there's a huge unknown attributed to Bill 57, that people cannot plan for the future because they don't know what the pension buyout is going to be because it's up to the market.

Fourth, it is not clear how fiduciary rules will work. Will the banks and the insurance firms who administer PRPPs be permitted to invest the funds and all of those investment products that they sell themselves?

These are outstanding questions, and I would think that whoever had written this piece of legislation would have at least put some plans in place for that or had some clarity. This is an issue that is consistent, actually, with this government, that they continue to bring pieces of legislation forward which have serious gaps in rationale and serious gaps in the design.

So we obviously have some serious concerns with Bill 57, and for good reason. The fact of the matter is that Ontario does have a retirement savings crisis, but the

answer is not yet another private sector savings vehicle. That's our position. We would rather see this government design a pension plan which (1) is affordable; (2) actually has some guarantees going forward; and (3) finds efficiencies of cost, a streamlined design to ensure that those management fees don't cut into the pension going forward.

Ontarians without workplace pension plans need a responsible, enhanced CPP. Obviously, this is the first choice. But that kind of leadership is not going to come from Mr. Harper. Mr. Harper, right now, is very fixated on Bill C-51, which should have everybody in this country standing up and protesting because it's a piece of legislation which will undermine the very essence of this country. I think that my counterparts on the other side of the House may find some consensus on that.

That's the ironic part about this. The federal government has gone down a very similar road. They've modelled the pooled registered pension plan at the federal level and the provincial government has just followed their lead. That's a little disappointing. The priority should be designing the best plan for the people of this province; Bill 57 is not that. It will not get our support. We can do so much better, and we actually have a responsibility to do better.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? I've got four people standing up. Door number one, please.

Interjection: Madeleine, that's you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak today on Bill 57. Yes, the previous speaker is right: It's of concern to everyone. Are we going to have enough money in our retirement, especially those of us who don't have a pension plan?

My family still thinks that we have here as MPPs a very wealthy pension plan. I have to repeat regularly that no, we don't. Of course, it was a bad decision that was taken by the previous government, and now the MPPs don't have pension plans. There was some discussion in the past to reinstate the MPP pension plan, but there is never a good time, especially when only one third of Ontarians have a pension plan.

This PRPP is the next best thing, since the federal government doesn't want to help us in this endeavour by opening their pension plan so that Ontarians could contribute more than what we're entitled to contribute right now. So this is the best thing. There is a lot of support out there. I hope that this bill will go sooner than later to committee. It's at committee that we can improve it.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The pooled registered pension plan is a good idea. It was the idea of our member from—

Mr. John Yakabuski: York-Simcoe.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: York-Simcoe—I knew that—and we supported it last year and we support it now. It's pleasing to see the government recognize a good idea when it is presented, and it is even more pleasing to see them adopt the idea. What would be most pleasing of all is if they would throw out the bad idea, which is their pension plan, which won't work. That one will cost 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion of money charged to employers and employees, so it's a very expensive payroll tax that will hurt Ontario, will hurt employees and will hurt employers.

But getting back to the positive news that they're doing a good thing—

Interjections.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: —and I wish they'd give me a moment to flatter them further—the pooled pension plan gives flexibility to the employers and employees. They can join or not; contribute or not. It will recognize and acknowledge that they may have other savings in other forms, like tax-free savings accounts, retirement plans of their own etc. These versatilities and flexibilities are absolutely necessary to make the plan work. It's unfortunate that if they go ahead with both, they will cancel the good with the bad, which is their idea.

We endorse this plan. It should go alone. It would do something good for Ontario. We thank the government for seeing something good, recognizing something good, and finally doing something good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased and honoured to be able to stand up in this House and to talk about a bill such as this. I thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for the insight that she brought to this bill.

New Democrats won't be supporting this bill. It makes me even more reaffirmed with my decision when I hear the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills saying that he will be supporting this bill, because we know that pensions should be universal. People should have to have a defined contribution plan where everybody has an opportunity to retire in dignity, to make sure—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think you mean "benefit."

Hon. Liz Sandals: You mean "benefit."

Miss Monique Taylor: Defined benefit; thank you. There are so many pension plans floating around this place these days that it's kind of confusing to try to keep up and on track.

The same day that the government, the Liberals, tabled this bill, they tabled Bill 56, which is a plan that they're talking about that might possibly be in place by 2020, I think the numbers are. This government may not even be in power by that time. We will have a provincial election. We'll have a federal election. Quite frankly, we could have enhanced CPP after this federal election with a Thomas Mulcair government because we know that New Democrats believe and will push forward to make sure that all people in this country have a decent pension.

Like I said, again, there are so many talks about pension plans and what's good for everybody. But what

this does, really, is benefit banks and insurance companies. People are struggling enough. We have a major boom of seniors that's going to be happening in the near future and absolutely no plan in place so make sure that folks can have the funds that they need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to have the chance to stand this afternoon and speak to Bill 57 in response to some of the debate and discussion that has already occurred. I guess I'll begin with the comments that we just heard a second ago from the member from Hamilton Mountain. I think it's fortunate, if I can speak for a second on behalf of the federal NDP, that we're not in the middle of a federal campaign, because those two minutes would have to be declared as a campaign expense, I fear, for Mr. Mulcair, if we were in the middle of a campaign.

What's most important to recognize, of course, in listening to the original comments from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, is that—and I understand why she might, for her own purposes, want to make this particular bill, Bill 57, look like it stands in isolation from the rest of the plan that Premier Wynne, our finance minister and our Associate Minister of Finance are developing and proceeding with as it relates to ensuring that we do truly have an enhanced retirement security system in place for years to come.

She would well know, of course, as her party's finance critic, that this is not a piece of legislation that stands in isolation from the rest of our plan. It's a plan that includes, of course, the ORPP. It's interesting for me to listen to that particular member as she talks about the need to have some sort of universally applied solution to help seniors in years to come. What's interesting to me from that perspective is that, of course, that was in the budget that the finance minister introduced last May—I think it was May 1—that that party clearly signalled they would not support, which led, of course, to the election campaign in which we talked very proudly of our plans to bring forward an ORPP. The people of Ontario endorsed that plan wholeheartedly; we came back and we passed that budget.

It's interesting to me that the third party, including the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, chose at that point in time, perhaps for opportunistic reasons, to not support our plan to support retirement security for the people of Ontario in years to come. That's why it's a little bit difficult to hear those comments in this debate from her today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo has two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain and Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the Attorney General and the Minister of Transportation for providing some important insights.

The Minister of Transportation, of course, would know—we both came here via by-elections. We both came here because of Bill 115, in some respects, because

some people ran out of this building as fast as they could when Bill 115 was brought into place. That was, of course—you'll remember, Mr. Speaker—the piece of legislation which squashed collective bargaining rights in the province of Ontario in order to make this government look like it was fiscally responsible so that they could win Kitchener-Waterloo. So just a little bit of history here for the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: What has that got to do with Bill 57?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would also like to remind the minister—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe the member listened intently to you when you were up. Do the same courtesy for her, would you, Minister of Transportation? Thank you so much for your co-operation.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: He will also remember, of course, that that budget, which was, of course, an austerity budget, had 6% cuts in every ministry except for health care, education, justice, and community and social services. But of course, they figured out how to do backdoor cuts in those ministries, which is why we have nurses being laid off, and front-line workers in education, and why 38 boards are going to see a reduction in their special education services. So do not preach in this House about that budget, because that budget was actually worth going to an election for. It was worth fighting for a better province.

I'm telling you, you know what else is worth fighting for? A good, strong pension plan, which we brought to this House in 2010. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, did that. Liberals voted against it. What you have on the floor in this province is not a good plan; I don't think so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to stand today in the House to speak a little further on the second reading of Bill 57. I will be sharing my time with the members from Durham, Davenport and Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

As outlined last week by my colleague the Honorable Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance, many workers in our province, as you may know, Speaker, are not saving enough. As well, we have learned through our talks in this House that Canada's retirement income system is made up of three pillars.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Transportation and the member from Etobicoke Centre are having a lovely conversation. Maybe you want to take it outside. Your own member is talking and you're not even listening. Thank you so much.

Continue.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: As I was saying, we have, basically, a retirement income system that is made up of three pillars. Pillar number one includes publicly funded supplements for seniors through vehicles such as Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and those are based on residency and income eligibility.

Pillar number two, the Canada Pension Plan, is a mandatory pension program for the employed and the self-employed. And then we have pillar number three which includes workplace pension plans and other assisted retirement savings—there is a whole array of them.

To address the undersaving challenge in the province of Ontario, there is no one solution. We have to take a multifaceted approach, with solutions and innovations from all three of these pillars. That is why our plan for enhancing the retirement income system in our province includes a variety of tools. Establishing pooled registered pension plans is yet another way in which we are addressing the undersavings challenge.

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Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit on just what pooled registered pension plans are, just for clarity. Many employers, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, have found that workplace pension plans, especially defined benefit plans, are costly and difficult to administer. PRPPs are a new type of voluntary tax-assisted individual retirement savings vehicles. As a new low-cost retirement savings vehicle that is professionally managed and portable, I would say, from one workplace to another, they are intended to make it easier for employees and self-employed persons to save for retirement. PRPPs are a vehicle for the self-employed to be able to invest in their retirement at a low cost.

Simply put, PRPPs are saving plans designed to provide retirement income for individuals who pay into them. People have their own individual accounts, and employers are also able to make contributions into these accounts. The contributions are locked in, and benefits at retirement are based on accumulated contributions and investment returns. There is also a tax advantage for individuals because they would not pay income tax on their PRPP contributions and on their investment returns until they withdraw their funds.

I also want to address very quickly: Last week, my colleagues in the House were asking how Ontarians will benefit from the PRPPs. First of all, they would help businesses because they would be easy to offer, they would be voluntary and they would be tax-assisted. PRPPs would also provide advantages to individuals because they would be low-cost, they would be tax-assisted, they would be portable and they would be locked in. The federal government has already implemented PRPPs for sectors under federal jurisdiction, and the legislation applies also to persons who are employed or self-employed in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. But we need to pass the legislation here in Ontario to make sure that Ontarians can benefit from it.

If passed, this bill would provide a legal framework for the establishment and administration of PRPPs in Ontario. Since we want to make PRPPs as similar as possible across the county, our proposed legislation adopts many of the key features of the federal PRPP legislative work. For any employers who choose to offer their employees PRPPs, the employer would be responsible

for selecting and entering into a contract with a third-party PRPP administrator, such as a bank or an insurance company. That bank or insurance company's administrator would then be responsible for managing the investments, and the employee of that company would be automatically enrolled in the PRPP offered by his or her employer. But employees can choose to opt out. They have up to 60 days to opt out, and I want to make that clear for the people that are watching from home: that they can opt out. There is an option to opt out.

Employees would make their contribution through automatic paycheque deductions, and the employer would be required to deduct and remit their employees' contributions to the administrator. So it's quite clearly set. It is, again, one of many options that this government is looking at to make sure that we can address the gap that we have in undersaving with the residents of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm assuming you were sharing your time. The member from York South–Weston, you were sharing your time with the member from Durham?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: That's what she said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, thank you.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I said Durham, Davenport and Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks to the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I was trying to help you out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I appreciate your help.

The member for Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to see that our government is taking the initiative to expand Ontarians' options when it comes to investing in their finances, especially when it comes to saving and investing in their retirement. We know that in this province, there are concerns with not saving enough for our later years. Furthering our options provides Ontarians with opportunities for greater income security.

The federal legislation that has allowed the provinces to permit pooled retirement pension plans is welcome, though it's not necessarily the ideal way of investing for retirement. Expanding CPP would, of course, be the ideal option, contributing to a Canadian investment plan that furthers investment in the country. Of course, our government is taking the much-needed initiative to fill the gap with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, one that will expand Ontarians' investments in their own province.

The PRPP in Ontario will also be administered by third-party financial institutions, meaning that it will be the investing and purchasing power of banks, rather than investment for the public good. So while the federal government is making at least a partial effort, there is still

very much that needs to be done and methods that would be much more ideal for Ontarians.

It is important to note, and I think vital to this process, that the PRPP is not considered a comparable income plan to the ORPP, and thus would not classify as an exemption from the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Still, PRPP stands as a valid option beyond CPP and ORPP for individuals and employers to set up systems within their own capacities for the benefits of retirement plans. They are also exempt for employers from the taxation of an RRSP, the viability of which, I imagine, lies in the benefit that small employers will see from the plans, and that will hopefully be made clear as the years go by.

Other provinces have also been implementing this federal plan with slight modifications. There are those within Quebec that go beyond the federal legislation. I hope that further examination of this legislation will ensure that the implementation of this plan will be tailored to the specific needs of our province and Ontarians. My hope is that the implementation of the PRPP and the expression of opting into a PRPP as an option will encourage Ontarians to take a harder and more detail-oriented look at their finances, their savings and how they are planning financially for their retirement.

Residents of Durham have expressed to me that as they age, they are wishing that they had saved more in their youth for their retirement, as well as for the well-being of their families.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I heard that in Bowmanville; that's right.

Mr. Granville Anderson: That's right.

I know that our government will be expanding efforts to encourage more deliberate financial planning skills for Ontarians in their younger years and that any help we can provide them with investing will be appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I will quote some findings from the *Toronto Star*:

"In 2012, Canadian defined benefit plans paid out \$72 billion to 3.5 million pensioners.

"Most of this money is spent where they live.

"In Ontario, 7% of all income in our towns and cities, or \$27 billion, is derived from defined benefit pensions.

"That \$27 billion generated \$3 billion in federal and provincial income tax, \$2 billion in sales taxes and \$1 billion in property tax on an annual basis.

"Seniors with defined benefit plans are confident consumers because the predictable income stream allows them to better plan their affairs."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Today I rise to speak on this necessary bill, Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014. I'd like to thank the member from York South-Weston for her comments on this bill, as well as the member from Durham and everyone who has had the opportunity to speak and contribute to the discussion here this afternoon.

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Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act of 2014, is a necessary one. The Minister of Finance introduced this legislation on December 8, 2014, and I commend him and the Associate Minister of Finance for their work to address the savings problems that so many of my constituents face in Davenport.

We all need to make sure that we save for our retirement. Our province is committed to implementing bold steps to enhance Ontarians' access to retirement income security. This is seen with Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. Encouraging investment in voluntary retirement savings tools such as pooled registered pension plans are part of the strategy.

The 2014 budget and fall economic statement demonstrated the government's intention to move forward with a PRPP framework that would be consistent with the model introduced by the federal government and also adopted by various other provinces. What this bill does is provide employees and self-employed individuals with an additional savings vehicle that is low-cost, professionally managed and portable from one workplace to another.

In addition, these individuals have more favourable tax treatments than group registered retirement savings plans. As a point of clarification, a voluntary retirement savings vehicle is not a comparable workplace pension plan in the new ORPP. In this sense, individuals enrolled in a PRPP are not exempt from participation in the new ORPP.

After two years of federal-provincial collaboration in the development of PRPPs, our federal partners were the first to introduce a legislative framework for PRPPs in December 2012. The framework applies to employees in federally regulated sectors such as banking, telecommunications and interprovincial transportation.

Legislation must now be passed in each province before PRPPs can be made available to individuals in provincially regulated sectors. The 2014 budget and fall economic statement demonstrated the government's intention to move forward with the PRPP framework. To date, five provinces have passed legislation to implement PRPPs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Which five provinces?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Let me tell you which five.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to hear the list.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

Applause.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: That's right. Ontario's PRPP framework follows suit with these provincial partners. In January of 2014, consultations were held seeking feedback on how PRPPs should be implemented in Ontario. The proposed act would apply in respect of individuals employed in provincial employment, the self-employed in Ontario as well as individuals employed in federally regulated industries whose employers do not offer PRPPs.

The proposed act incorporates many of the features of the federal model. There is voluntary participation and

contributions by employers. Where an employer elects to offer a PRPP, enrolment of employees would be automatic, subject to the ability to opt out within 60 days, and funds in members' accounts could be pooled for the purposes of investing plan assets, and members could make investment choices from among the options offered by administrators.

Last time I spoke in this House to discuss Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, I talked about the effect of retirement savings on small businesses. Small businesses are a crucial part of our province's economic growth and well-being. In my wonderful riding of Davenport, we have many great small businesses which make our community that much more vibrant. Davenport has so many interesting and transforming neighbourhoods which are really tied together by dynamic, small and local businesses. Anyone can see this with a stroll through areas such as Corso Italia, Bloordale, West Queen West, the Junction Triangle and Little Portugal. Walking along many of these neighbourhoods, it is easy to see how integrated and essential these small businesses are to our community. Many of them are owned and run by our local residents, and they are people who dedicated their lives and are truly invested in their local community.

It is often quite difficult to start your own business. They are absolutely vital for our economy, and we must do what we can to support these individuals and organizations. This bill does that. PRPPs are intended to be particularly beneficial for small and medium-size businesses that may not have the capacity to offer traditional pension plans.

It is my pleasure to speak today on Bill 57, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House believe in national initiatives, whether it's those initiatives that we're still waiting for from the federal government, like a national housing policy, a national transit policy or a national infrastructure policy. But failed as the concept of pooled pension plans is, which the Conservatives promote as the best vehicle for retirement planning, we on this side of the House do realize there was federal legislation approved for PRPPs and a number of provinces have implemented legislation. Ontario will join those provinces in creating the ability for Ontarians and Canadians to be able to participate in PRPPs. As my colleague from Davenport just mentioned, especially for small businesspeople and those who are self-employed, this might very well be a very good vehicle for planning for their retirement.

Mr. Speaker, we know that only about 23% or 24% of people in Canada contribute to their RRSPs on an annual basis. That's far less than should. We also know there is well in excess of \$200 billion of unused contribution

room. Clearly, Canadians and Ontarians aren't saving enough for their retirement. That only bodes ill for governments in the future, as many Canadians will have to turn to the public purse to assist them and support them in retirement. Whatever we on this side of the House can do to help advance retirement savings, we will do.

Of course, the ORPP, which is a separate piece of legislation, is a far superior vehicle than this for doing that, because it will allow many of those who would, in fact, never contribute to a pension plan, and whose employers may never contribute to a pension plan, to be able to save for retirement and retire in dignity.

What we have before us this afternoon is the pooled pension plans act, and that will allow many Ontarians to contribute to their retirement savings and have a pension that will be portable as they go from employer to employer or perhaps start their own business. That is a great benefit of this particular piece of legislation. So, failed as the concept is, it is an important piece of the puzzle for our government to participate in this national initiative. Of course, having improved CPP and an ORPP is really the best solution for Ontarians' retirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise. I'm somewhat surprised by some of the comments made over there. I know that they say they would like the feds to take off on this, but if they would think back to what was actually said at the federal government, they said they were interested in it, but now is not the time.

Businesses are in trouble. You can see from the stats in this province that the number of people on minimum wage is up drastically; 30%, I think. That's not a sign of a strong economy. We're seeing a manufacturing industry that has been decimated in this province well before the downturn in 2008. I look at my own riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry—actually Glengarry. We lost about 3,300 jobs before 2008, companies leaving when they—the evidence of what this government is really doing.

I'm glad to hear that the member over there was talking about hurrying up and getting a car from GM in Oshawa. They may not have an option in the not-too-distant future, because they're talking about leaving too. Of the seven or eight car companies that have opened factories on this continent in the last dozen years, not one was opened in Ontario. That speaks to this government's planning.

You can imagine the confidence people would have in the ORPP, putting money into a plan that has direct access by this government. What will be there in the future, let alone all the other problems? This government was talking about accessing it on infrastructure. Will that be there?

1640

I remember, just last week, I think CUPE was talking about how proud they were of their pension plan, a defined contribution plan that was generating 9%. I asked them, "Well, how would you feel once this legislation is

passed and you must move over to the ORPP?" And they said, "Oh, no, we won't. We're going to get some amendments to allow that not to happen." I said, "Good luck with that." But they were getting 9%, and I just wonder if that's what we're expecting with this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to attend the Workers' Action Centre. They're doing their review of the Labour Relations Act and their review of the Employment Standards Act. What they told me there, at the table I was participating in, is what workers really need are good jobs. They need good jobs, not temporary contract jobs through temporary agencies; not part-time jobs; not contract jobs; not jobs without pensions or without benefits. How are they going to be able to even contribute to a PRPP when they're making part-time wages or they're making minimum wage or just above minimum wage?

Some of the experts have also weighed in on the PRPP recently, and what they say about them is that these plans represent only a mild improvement over the existing Registered Retirement Savings Plan that anybody can do personally on any day of the week. And, in fact, you could have that money deducted personally from your paycheck, deposited into your bank account and self-direct your own RRSP without paying huge management fees to the banks and to the insurance companies—to do so on your own behalf.

In fact, the experts say that, lastly, it seems almost too obvious to state that a pension plan should actually pay a pension at the end of the day—at the very least be able to pay out a pension—but PRPPs will not be able to do so, because the federal tax rules prohibit any pension plan from paying a pension unless it's a defined benefit, and allowing PRPPs to pay a pension could improve retirement income security if that was actually part of the plan.

So, Speaker, I look forward to having a longer opportunity to speak some more on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I was delighted to be here this afternoon to listen to the very articulate remarks from my colleagues the members from York South–Weston, Durham, Davenport and Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I just want to comment particularly on the new members from Durham, Davenport and Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Obviously, they were on the hustings last June. I know these people well. They were in their communities, they were in the coffee shops, and they heard about pensions and the need to have a number of approaches for retirement here in Ontario, whether it's Bill 57 or the Ontario pension plan. Mr. Speaker, I remember you spoke on numerous occasions very passionately about the need for pensions in the province of Ontario, and we on this side see this as a very important initiative—both bills.

I know just recently I was at the East City Coffee Shop on Hunter Street East in Peterborough—a great

restaurant owned by the Sina family, hard-working people—and I was having my Western sandwich there and a coffee; it's still \$6. There were a number of people who were there that day and we were engaging in a discussion about pensions. There was a consensus of the people there—probably five or six people, representing all aspects of life in Peterborough—and they were saying that they applaud this government and support this government as we move forward to provide adequate pensions in the province of Ontario.

This is very, very important that we move forward. We'd like the government of Canada to be a partner, but they haven't come to the table as of yet.

So I want to thank my four colleagues who got their views on the record today—three new members representing their constituents with great vigour and passion—from York South–Weston, Durham, Davenport, Etobicoke–Lakeshore. They know how important pensions are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the address by the multitude of members from the other side. They really have taken on the tag-team approach to this debating process here in the Legislature. I commend them on being able to marshal their folks together and get four in at the price of one, but I would have thought they'd want to spend a little more time speaking on the bill. I'm hoping to get a 20-minute slot at some point, but I just haven't been able to make the grade at this point. But I do have a couple of minutes to speak on this.

It's interesting that the Liberals brought forward this pooled retirement pension plan right after their Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, Bill 56, which passed second reading not that long ago. I don't think they're really sure what they want for Ontarians, and it makes me wonder just how committed they are to their own piece of legislation.

The pooled retirement pension plan has never been their idea. It has been proposed by others. In fact, our member Julia Munro brought that out in a bill before.

I'm just wondering what the true motive, or what the plan for the Liberals is with this Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Is it just another one of these red herrings that they're throwing out there? Are they really committed to it themselves?

We all know it's going to be bad for the Ontario economy. That goes without saying. There's not a single credible institution that has said this is a good idea for the Ontario economy. It's wrong. It's not going to work.

Now, right on the heels of it, they're coming out with this pooled plan, which we support. We're going to be supporting Bill 57. As you know, we did not vote in favour of Bill 56 at second reading. We'll be supporting Bill 57, because it's the right direction to go so that there are savings to be accrued by having the pooling of savings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore has two minutes.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: To the member from Renfrew: I think it's called an onslaught, actually, what we've been doing this afternoon.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, pensions might be very important to those of us in this chamber—most of us are closer to needing them than many others. My daughter, Ariana, is here today. I worry about her and her pension 60 years from now and making sure that by then Ontarians have the ability to have a secure retirement.

As I said in my remarks earlier, pooled pension plans are part of a national construct. They are not, in my view, the ideal way to promote retirement savings, but they are a national construct, and we will participate in that.

The real solution, though, is an enhanced CPP. I'm hopeful that perhaps by next year that will be a conversation we can then have, but failing that, it will have to be the ORPP.

On this side of the House, we're very clear on what we want: We want Ontarians to have good retirement savings, we want Ontarians to have security in their retirement, and we want to provide them with the best possible vehicles to do that, for those in this chamber and for future generations, Mr. Speaker. That's what this is about. That's what everything that we do in this chamber is really about: future generations.

I look forward to the ongoing debate on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased and proud to be able to stand to talk about Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act of 2014. It sounds an awful lot like the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act of 2013, the former Bill 50, which was introduced by our member from York-Simcoe.

The Ontario PC caucus has been at the forefront of advocating for PRPPs, and I'm pleased that the government has realized that this is, indeed, the right way to go and that people need options for their retirement savings.

Actually, Speaker, the member from York-Simcoe's bill did pass second reading. It was referred to committee after second reading but died on the order paper.

PRPPs are a type of pension plan that is similar to a defined contribution plan and are completely voluntary. Employer contributions are not mandatory and therefore PRPPs are supported by the business owners as well.

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Ontarians have a right to choose how they save for retirement. That is why we are, on this side of the House, so opposed to the ORPP, the Ontario registered pension program being presented by the government. But we are indeed in favour of the PRPP, the pooled registered pension plan. This is offered to anyone who is working in Ontario, including the self-employed.

PRPPs are portable between jobs and employers. That means that when you leave a job and move to another one, you can take your PRPP with you. It's yours. When you die, it becomes part of your estate, unlike an ORPP, where you pay into it, if it's passed, and you don't get to reap the benefits—your family doesn't—when you die.

The PRPP is something that belongs as part of your estate.

The fact that they're portable makes them easier to continue contributing to when you do move to a new job. A portable pension plan is a convenient pension plan. Again, this is considerably and diametrically opposed to an ORPP, the Ontario registered pension plan, which forces employees and employers into contributing 1.9% of their salary each.

When we were on the pre-budget consultation tour only this past January, I met up with a guy in southwestern Ontario who has 15 employees. He said to me, "Tell me a little bit about that plan." And I explained it to him. He said, "Yes, yes, yes. I understand. That's everything I feared it was." He told me, "Here's what I'm going to do. I've got 15 employees. I have to now pay 1.9% into a mandated pension plan for them and they're going to have to pay 1.9% of their salary. They're not going to want to take a haircut on their paycheque. They're going to come to me with their hand out looking for more money to make them equal again, and I've got to take a haircut on an additional 1.9%. So I'm going to fire one of my 15 employees, use that money to pay my share of the ORPP and to give them a raise to make up for the money that the government is taking." This is an anecdotal story. This is a true story of what happened. That's what's going to happen across Ontario.

That's why we prefer the PRPP, which is voluntary—Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan have all passed PRPP legislation. Nova Scotia introduced legislation in October 2014. They're going to continue their conversation on it.

That anecdotal story from southwestern Ontario is exactly what the Ministry of Finance said would happen in their confidential advice to cabinet. They told Premier Wynne, at that time newly elected, "This pension tax that you bring in will cost you 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion you take out of the economy." It looks to be a \$6-billion program. Their own ministry has forecasted that we're going to lose 54,000 jobs in Ontario, much like the story of the one guy in southwestern Ontario with his 15 employees. He's going to have to let somebody go to pay for it. Companies just don't have any more money.

In 2012, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce submitted a letter to the former finance minister—then-minister, actually—Dwight Duncan, calling on the government to introduce legislation to implement PRPPs. The business community wanted this in 2012. I think the Ontario chamber has 60,000 members. This is a quote from their letter: "We hope you believe, as we do, that PRPPs will help strengthen the retirement income system in Ontario." I think that's a fair sentence from them.

The Ontario chamber has come out, rather, on the other side on the ORPP. They have talked about the fact that they are not convinced that the ORPP is the best solution for the so-called retirement income challenge or the undersaving problem. The chamber and their members—well, here's the quote: "The chamber and our members have been worried about the potential negative

impacts of the ORPP on the business climate.” Another quote—this is from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: “We are convinced that the ORPP should not go ahead. We really want to see the government come out with an economic impact analysis of how the ORPP will impact Ontario’s economy.”

So here you’ve got them saying, “We really like the PRPP. Let’s get going with it; we hope that you’ll put this in because it will strengthen the economy.” And here, on the ORPP, they’re saying, “We’re going to lose jobs, it’s going to affect our business climate and we don’t want you to go ahead with it.”

In the chamber’s business confidence index, they’re very concerned that the government is discussing the Ontario Registered Pension Plan at a time when business confidence is already amongst its lowest in history—very concerned.

They have just published a report of their business confidence, and if we look here, they asked of their members, “How confident are you in the Ontario economy right now?” Two years ago, the result was that 44% were confident in the economy. Last year it was up to 48%. But this year it tumbled to 29%. That’s a very big concern.

Here’s another one: “How confident are you in your own organization’s economic outlook right now?” Again, two years ago, 72% were confident in the economic outlook. Last year, it rose to 74%. Bravo. However, this year, it has tumbled to 58%. That’s almost 20 points. While the Ontario chamber is in favour of PRPP, they are vehemently opposed to the ORPP.

Now we’ve got the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and a similar style you’re going to hear, Speaker. In 2012, the CFIB submitted a letter to then-finance minister Dwight Duncan urging him “to move quickly to implement pooled registered pension plans in our province. We further ask that you would”—they wanted to address the problems with the current pension tools by promoting lower fees, shifting admin burdens etc. So here we are, again, with the CFIB asking for urgent implementation of the PRPP, but when it comes to the ORPP, like the chamber, it’s a different story.

The CFIB asked their members, on the implementation of the ORPP, “Do you support the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan?” Eighty-six per cent of their members were against it. They went on and said, “If implemented, what impact would paying additional ORPP premiums have on your business?” Sixty-nine per cent of the business community said they would freeze or cut salaries; 53% said they would reduce the number of employees; and 52% said they would reduce investments in their business. Thirteen per cent, by the way, said they were going to close down their businesses. They’ve had enough, whether it’s skyrocketing hydro rates, the highest payroll taxes in Canada, now the highest aviation fuel tax in Canada—all these other reasons added together. Like the chamber of commerce said, this is just not the time, when business confidence is at its lowest.

1700

Again, the CFIB said, about the PRPP, “We want you to move quickly to implement it.” They like that. On the ORPP, 86% are against it. You’ve got people who will reduce their number of employees and close their businesses. The analysis they did says “that this mandatory pension plan would cost Ontario 160,000 person-years of employment. As well, it would increase the province’s unemployment rate by 0.5%.” This is the analysis that the CFIB did.

They also talk about the fact that, “If implemented, the ORPP will severely undermine the ability of Ontario’s job creators to grow their businesses and continue offering” new businesses in Ontario.

“The ORPP targets ... small business owners and their employees.” The PRPP, being voluntary, helps small businesses. In fact, it helps individual business owners—self-employed people. “Forcing additional pension contributions reduces income available to cover essential goods and services for Ontario families.”

We all know what the CFIB is telling us. It’s going to take 40 years for employees to receive full benefits. Quite frankly, they’ve surmised that Ontarians don’t trust an entity at arm’s length from this government to manage their retirement savings. They think about things like the gas plant scandal or MaRS or the Sudbury scandal. They think about that when they think about this government managing their retirement savings.

While they’re fully in favour of the PRPP, they are against the ORPP—another organization that is like that.

Speaker, in January and February of last year, the Ontario chamber, which we spoke about, and the Certified General Accountants of Ontario partnered to consult employers on pension reform. Nobody here will disagree that there is a requirement to reform our pension needs in Ontario. Everybody wants to see everyone retire with dignity. But they found that employers are firmly in favour of PRPPs—this is the Certified General Accountants of Ontario—and are much less supportive of the ORPP.

Here’s what the president and CEO of Sun Life said: “I don’t think we need to or should mandate retirement savings.” That’s why they’re in favour of the PRPP. That’s why our member from York-Simcoe brought this bill, Bill 50, to the Legislature, and that’s why we passed it at second reading.

The Association of Canadian Pension Management has championed the concept of PRPPs. The “ACPM believes that this kind of innovative new arrangement is key to creating the kind of retirement security that working Canadians deserve.” I agree with the ACPM as well.

These are the kinds of things we have that contrast the fully acceptable PRPP over the job-killing pension tax of the ORPP.

I know that there are members in the government who have been referring to what we call the David Dodge report. It’s Macroeconomic Aspects of Retirement Savings; it’s just easier to call it the David Dodge report. Now it’s really interesting to note that Dodge has seven

recommendations, none of which include a provincial pension plan, the ORPP, or the pension tax.

In fact, here are a couple of David Dodge's conclusions: "To the extent possible, general social welfare is probably better served by leaving the 'savings decision' up to individual households." That's the PRPP; that's the choice. That's not a mandatory ORPP, but a voluntary PRPP. He also said that "increased CPP contributions by employers would likely have a small downward impact on corporate saving. They would also encourage investment in labour-saving technology...." We know what labour-saving technology means, Speaker; it's job losses.

So you've got the David Dodge report telling you you're going to lose jobs when you put in a program such as increased contributions by employers. You've got the Ministry of Finance's own documents, which we did unearth through the gas plants scandal hearings—they were some of the documents that we got and we were able to quote from them because they were released publicly—that told us that for every \$2 billion you take out of the business world, you lose 18,000 jobs. That's pretty much what the David Dodge report says, but their own Ministry of Finance put some numbers to it that kind of put some meat on the bone.

Dr. Ian Lee is a Carleton University professor from the Sprott School of Business. It was interesting: He came to our pre-budget consultations in Ottawa when all three parties travelled there. He spoke to us at length, and he talked about—it's a little technical—the bottom quintiles that are not going to benefit from the proposed pension. So who is he talking about? He is talking about people who can least afford to lose 1.9% of their paycheck to put into this pension program. First of all, they're the least able to afford to do it, but at the end, 40 years from now when it's time to cash in, and they're retired and they look to get that back, the GIS will be clawed back 50%. For other people who are not in the bottom quintile, as he calls it, you don't have a GIS, you don't have a guaranteed income supplement, so you're not going to get anything clawed back. But the lowest earners are going to be putting this money in, but they get their GIS clawed back because they "won't need it." So they're the ones who can least afford it, and they're the ones who are going to be the most hurt by the ORPP.

The PRPP is the preferred option. I can't imagine why we need both when you've got one, the ORPP, that's going to mandate that you must have this pension. Then why are you going to have an optional one?

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this for the last 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This Legislature is a very special place. It's where we come as elected officials to create legislation—to pass legislation, to debate legislation—to make a difference in people's lives. When we're talking about a difference in people's lives when it comes to legislation, we're talking about the retirement bill today. Speaker, we don't think this PRPP is going to help

the average person collect a pension at the end of the day. We are going to oppose this bill because it isn't the right way to go when you're talking about retirement security.

Speaker, when you look at Google, if you google defined benefit versus defined contribution, defined benefit is by far the way for income security when you talk about retirement planning.

1710

There are benefits to a defined benefit plan, Speaker. Here are some of the benefits: inflation protection, early retirement benefits, survivor benefits and disability benefits. Opposite that is defined contribution: At retirement, individuals may be able to buy a lifetime annuity that includes some additional benefits such as inflation protection, but these extras tend to be expensive, which reduces the amount they will have available to provide an income stream.

Speaker, people are not going to buy those benefits if they're on a defined contribution plan. But under a defined benefit plan, it's already covered. So this is not the plan that people actually need to survive when it comes to guaranteed retirement payments when they're ready to retire. This is not the right plan. I'm glad to speak to this debate and let the government know that this is not the way to go.

I talked to someone in my riding, Speaker, and they said that this Liberal government doesn't know what they're doing when it comes to pension plans. It's a mishmash, and it's a mess.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Ajax-Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Wherever you say, Mr. Speaker, that's where I'm from.

Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to join the conversation and debate on this subject. I can tell you that it's something we have discussed variables of over the years. I can tell you that I see five provinces already in that format, and they have produced legislation; they have proceeded with that. Those, of course, are British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec. It's something that the pooled resources will have a small impact, cost-wise, on employers as well as the contributors. That has been a concern of the chambers of commerce.

As a small business person who commenced a business in his teen years—obviously, he's been in business longer than 50 years—and a member of the chamber of commerce for over 50 years, I, as an employer, have to tell you that it's not a cost that you, as a chamber of commerce, should be concerned about, and I tell my colleagues that; it's the investment in the employee. That employee is your lifeblood. If you don't have great people—and we are fortunate enough to have great people—you won't succeed. So those funds are simply part of the cost of doing business. You can simply find other efficiencies or other ways to circumvent that and make it bearable for those good people who have devoted their lives to working for you, when it comes to their retirement time.

It's something that you can look at objectively and say, "If it's going to cost me one penny, I won't support it." You have to be a realist. You have to be an independent business person with a heart. It's very important that you do that for your employees, because without that, they will not produce for you, and you will not continue to be successful. I think it's a great idea to proceed, and the sooner the better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I always look forward to listening to my colleague from Nipissing, because he always brings so much to the table. During the debate, I was reading the latest Fedeli Focus on Finance. It's too bad that some of the members opposite wouldn't read that, because there's a lot of good data in it.

We received some of the data that talked about the ORPP that they are putting forth as well. We're looking at losing 54,000 jobs—their numbers. I mean, it goes to show you that the plan they are moving ahead—the other bill; the first one—is actually looking at job losses in the bottom quintile, people not receiving the benefits they paid for.

We've always been supporting the ORPP. Julia Munro, our member here, brought it forth two years ago. Other provinces have followed suit. It's a good plan that employers can opt into.

I heard the comment from the member from—is it Oshawa-Ajax? He talked about, "Listen to what the other provinces are doing." I think it would be nice if they'd listen to what the other provinces are doing with the first plan, because that's not something they're moving ahead on. They realize how fragile the economy is and just what it will mean for many people who will end up losing their jobs. I guess this government thinks it's a success; it will put more people on the minimum wage. They're so very proud of converting a good-paying manufacturing job into a minimum wage job, but that's not how we see it. We think we have to go through and try to look at policies in a format that will actually raise our quality of life and standard of living back to where we grew up a decade or a couple of decades ago and it was moving towards. Anyway, we will be supporting this bill and look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Nipissing feels very strongly about this issue. During question period this morning, he totally used up all of his energy because he was so passionate about addressing the fact that of course, yesterday, the minister—we were both at the Toronto board of trade. The minister thought we'd get out there and learn something, but in fact we just learned that this government is really good at inflating their own deficit targets so that they can look like they've met those targets.

Of course, we are dealing with the deficit, which grew from \$9.2 billion to \$10.5 billion, ballooning to \$10.9 billion this year. It's proof that this government does not

listen to the experts. We would like them to listen to the experts on PRPPs and, of course, the ORPP. That's why I referenced the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan and their most recent research study that shows that defined benefit pension plans actually meet the needs of local economies and inspire investment in the province, especially for those northern and rural communities. I think the member from Nipissing knows this.

Obviously, the real solution to the retirement crisis is one that benefits all of us, which Bill 57 does not do. While there's no shortage of good ideas that can help ensure that Canadians and Ontarians are financially secure in retirement, it would take commitment from both governments and employers. I think that's the fundamental difference: that we see the issue of creating and designing a strong pension plan as a shared responsibility. I think he understands that, at the very least, people who do invest in a PRPP should be guaranteed at least a portion of their working income when they retire. After all, they've earned it. With PRPPs there's no guarantee of that happening. So that's why we can't support this. But, of course, we're always willing to listen to the member from Nipissing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): How nice.

The member from Nipissing has two minutes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. I hope you enjoy the next two minutes, then. I want to thank the members from London-Fanshawe, Ajax-Pickering, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Kitchener-Waterloo for their commentary. The real solution, in my opinion, is having a job. When you think about 500,000 people in Ontario who woke up this morning without a job, I know everybody in this Legislature—we think about those people every day.

We particularly think about the 300,000 of them who used to work in manufacturing in Ontario, whether it's Heinz or Kellogg's or Caterpillar or Wrigley or General Mills. These are companies who were proud Canadian companies—Arclin in North Bay. All my life they were there, under the name Reichhold. All of these companies have left. They didn't go out of business; they just left Ontario. I think that is the underlying problem when we talk about our pension program; it all stems from having a job. When you've got the province with the highest cost of energy in all of North America, when you've got the highest pension payroll tax in Canada, when you've got, as of today, the highest aviation fuel tax in the country, these are not the incentives that the business community wants. These are not the incentives to create jobs. I've not ever found a new tax that has created a job. So the real solution is having a job. I know that we will all continue to work towards that goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

1720

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always a pleasure to rise and weigh in on some of these bills that have a lot of people opposed on one side and a lot of people in favour on another side.

I think I'll start off agreeing with the member from Nipissing that more importantly than talking about PRPPs, we really should be talking about jobs. We should be talking about jobs and the need for good jobs in our community. I can tell you, Speaker, that in my riding, with the loss of manufacturing jobs—thousands of them—many people have actually had to sell their houses to survive in retirement. They don't have the money to invest in a PRPP, let alone an RRSP, because they've gone through those RRSPs as well that they were able to invest in when they had a good job to augment the pension that they actually thought they were going to get out of these companies that they slaved for for 30 and 40 years. As you know, Speaker, coming from Hamilton, even those pensions aren't secure any longer.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Steelworkers.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Steelworkers across this province who thought they were going to have a \$1,600 or \$2,000 pension perhaps 10 years ago and who thought today they might have a \$3,000-a-month pension—those pensions are all at risk. I've seen, in my own community—Atlas Specialty Steels, which went out of business about 10 years ago—people who had a \$2,000 pension, only to lose a third of it five or six years down the road, and some of those health care benefits as well that went with it. Those people are struggling in our communities now.

As the previous New Democrat housing and community and social services critic, I can't help but be reminded every day, Speaker, of the countless emails and phone calls that I have received from across this province: seniors who face way too many obstacles day in and day out to allow them to have contributed to a pension plan, particularly those ones who are new seniors, not the ones who are 70 and 80 and perhaps had a small pension plan from wherever they happened to work in their life.

As the labour critic most recently, I've already been exposed to the need for pensions of Ontarians through those discussions with the people in my riding and with the labour force across Ontario that I've been able to meet with in a very short period of time. I received a very memorable phone call not too long ago about how the system is currently failing too many hard-working families in our province.

Paul from Kitchener—Waterloo, one of Ms. Fife's constituents, an ODSP recipient, injured at work, unable to work, let alone contribute to a pension plan, is living on seven credit cards and juggling one each month to be able to actually pay off the other ones. When he learned that this government was actually cutting the contributions to ODSP for those people who were actually able to go to work, which would have helped this fellow actually find maybe some training and some work, he just kind of threw up his hands and said, "What am I going to do? There isn't anything that I can do. I can't live on this." How are people like this gentleman actually going to be able to contribute to a pension plan?

Recently in my riding, I got a call from a senior. Her name is Bianca. She lives in Thorold, in part of my

riding. She got a gas bill worth \$1,000 for a two-month period. She lives in a very modest house in Thorold—probably a 75-year-old, two-storey, 1,200-square-foot house—and she got a \$1,000 bill. She is a senior. How is she going to pay \$1,000? She worked at the St. Lawrence Seaway for a long period of time and she has a very small pension. I don't know what kind of job she did there, but I don't think that she made a whole lot of money in her time. So it's vital that the government is addressing the concerns of seniors with respect to their home heating costs.

But we're here today talking about PRPPs. As such, I can't talk about the PRPP or the ORPP without looking at it from this lens and seeing how it isn't going to serve the interests of Ontarians, especially those left on the margins, those people being paid minimum wage, which is a large percentage of this workforce, and those who need it the most.

As we know, there are too many Ontarians without sufficient workplace pensions struggling to make ends meet once they retire. Pension plans, defined benefit plans—I think the member from Kitchener—Waterloo said only about 30% of the population actually has that kind of pension plan—allow seniors to be financially prepared. They allow them to continue to contribute to the economy.

Seniors on a defined pension plan can actually go out and buy a house, because they know that every month they're going to have \$3,000 or \$2,000. Across this province, only if you own a house in Toronto or Mississauga, in areas where housing prices rise dramatically, can you actually sell your house and use that as your pension plan. And that happens in Niagara and it happens in Hamilton as well. Lots of people actually are moving from Toronto and Mississauga, selling their houses, getting a million bucks, and they're actually moving to Niagara, they're moving to Hamilton, they're moving to some rural communities because they didn't have a defined benefit pension plan and so now they will use that \$700,000 they have left over from the sale of their house to actually be their retirement dollars, to augment their CPP and their old-age pension.

But in places like Welland and Thorold and places in my riding where housing prices do not rise dramatically each year, those seniors don't have that ability. They either have to sell their house entirely and move into an apartment to use those funds or they stay and they struggle every day. They pay outrageous hydro bills and they pay outrageous gas bills and they pay outrageous water bills from the aging infrastructure that's sadly been ignored by provincial and federal governments for years.

There was a study on workplace productivity, health and financial wellness from Manulife, one of those insurance companies that want to get our PRPP money, and from Ipsos Reid that found financially prepared employees with good pensions are more engaged; they're more productive in their workplace. They feel that the stress of their personal financial situation—they're less likely to be distracted and they are more focused at work.

Employees who are financially prepared are more likely to have healthy lifestyles and they contribute, of course, to the local economy. They're not afraid to spend that money because they know every month that cheque will keep coming.

They talked to thousands of Canadians with benefits and a retirement plan and thousands of Canadians without any retirement plan. Of those with workplace benefits and retirement savings plans, 80% with pensions were financially prepared compared to 52% without, and 70% with pensions were more likely to have a debt management plan.

So it's up to us, the members of this House, to make sure we have a progressive pension plan, a defined benefit plan that people can actually rely on in their senior years so seniors can retire with dignity—a plan that is supported by workers, because this plan is not supported by workers. It's not supported by workers, it's not supported by the unions that represent workers, and it certainly isn't going to be a vehicle for people working in temporary or precarious work.

Now, workers who cannot afford to contribute to their own RRSP or their own tax-free savings account are not going to be able to afford to contribute to a PRPP, so it's ridiculous that we're even proposing that this is a vehicle to assist probably a fairly large percentage of our population.

What workers want are jobs that pay a wage that can support them and their families. What workers want is a government to address legislation and regulation that would improve the plight of temporary agency workers, that would provide workers in precarious work with the ability to have the same wages, the same benefits, a pension plan and the same working conditions as workers who are not in a contract situation or not working for a temporary agency. Then they wouldn't need a PRPP or an ORPP, because then they would actually have the wages to save some money themselves in a vehicle that they wanted, to augment that pension plan they would have if they were treated like an employee and not like a contract or temporary worker.

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What workers want is the Liberal government to ensure that the temp and precarious situations they find themselves in have the same rules applied to them as workers who are employees of a company or an agency, and that the same ESA rules apply to those workers so that they can get their vacation pay, their termination pay or their in-lieu-of-notice pay. Actually, if they had that money, they'd be able to, perhaps, save some of it, or put it in a tax-free savings account or invest in their own RRSP.

What workers without pensions want is decent hours for decent income. They want employment equity. They don't want the men being paid more than the women. They don't want to work beside somebody who is an employee doing the same job when they are from a temp agency and they're making \$15 an hour, and that other person is making \$30 an hour.

I can tell you, Speaker, in my experience working for the Ontario Nurses' Association, we have hospitals with public dollars in this province today still paying agencies \$100 an hour for a registered nurse, when nurses actually working for the employer probably make about 40 bucks, on average. We're using public dollars to pay agencies. These nurses then get paid \$50 an hour, and the agency is making \$50 out of every hour that a registered nurse banks. We're using tax dollars to subsidize the work of the nurses to the agency. So the agency is making as much money per hour as the nurse is actually making, as opposed to the hospitals hiring permanent, full-time or part-time registered nurses. The hospitals will tell you that they can't find them, but, in fact, it isn't that they can't find them; it's that nurses, not unlike other workers in this province, want permanent, full-time jobs with pensions, with benefits, with health benefits and with a decent wage.

What workers want in the province is to be covered by the same vacation pay provisions and the same holiday pay provisions that they would have if they had been hired by that company, and they want the Employment Standards Act to not exempt them because they work in a particular sector or they work for a particular company. They want to be treated the same. They want to be treated with respect.

And what workers want is a minimal paid sick leave plan, which they don't get when they're temporary workers or if they're in precarious work. We all know, Speaker, that everyone gets sick once in a while, and if these people had a minimal sick pay and they were sick, they'd have the money to put into a tax-free savings account or into a personal RRSP without having to go without wages.

Speaker, this PRPP is something that is not going to solve the problems of people's savings here in the province, because as I said, if you can't afford to do it yourself into an RRSP, why would you put your money into a pooled RPP? I don't see our kind of pooled RPPs doing any great things over the last four years here at the Legislature. Why would you put your money into a vehicle that's actually going to take more out of the investment dollars than if you did it yourself? Instead of 2% management fees that you might pay into a personal RRSP, you're going to be paying 3% fees. The banks and the insurance companies, who don't need that money—they're making record profits across this province and across this country—don't need those fees.

So I don't know why, even if you were entering into some kind of vehicle of savings for people, you wouldn't be looking to the defined benefit plans in this province, like HOOPP and OMERS, to give you advice. They're the people who are adequately managing people's dollars, those people who, I guess, now have the luxury of being in defined benefit plans, because we see that ending, or being reduced, here across the province.

But why do you want to prop up the banks and insurance companies at the expense of the investments of people who can least afford to invest? What pensions are all about is making sure that, as people retire, they have

adequate income to be able to participate in their communities, that they're able to perhaps help their grandchildren or their great-grandchildren participate in some activities with them, that they're able to travel a little bit. You're not going to be able to do that, Speaker, with putting a couple of thousand bucks a year into an RPP, because I can tell you that a \$100,000 RRSP only buys you about \$500 to \$550 a month at the Royal Bank. That's it.

I was in the bank the other day, and there was a notice there—always at income tax time. If you want to buy an investment, you can get about \$550 a month for \$100,000. Well, people on minimum wage and people making \$15 an hour or less investing into these PRPPs are never going to have \$100,000 at the end of the day, because all they're going to have is what they put in plus a little bit of interest that they might earn, dependent on the market, and, at the end of the day, the management fees deducted. They're not going to even have that amount of \$500 a month.

I think that the government really needs to rethink this, because PRPPs are market-dependent. The management fees are carved out right off the hop. So regardless of whether the market is in a positive or a minus, they take their management fees right up front. We all saw that. Anybody who had any investments, any mutual funds or any RRSPs over the last few years, regardless of whether your investment went down by 20%, the investment fees were still there.

So the fees need to be kept low, in any event, if the government proceeds with this option. You need to keep the fees low. They need to be no higher than perhaps what HOOPP and OMERS and some of those public sector pensions are doing for 30% of the population.

There needs to be a lot more discussion with the workforce that this is going to apply to. I know that although it's not mandatory, there are issues that certainly have been raised with me about, "Okay, so for the next five years, I'm going to invest voluntarily into this PRPP. Am I going to actually be able to move that money into the ORPP when it's up and running five years from now? Is there going to be an option that will actually allow me to purchase so many years of service with those dollars?" I doubt it. I haven't actually seen that anywhere, Speaker.

I don't want us to be kind of duping people into thinking that they're going to have some significant dollars at the end of the day because they are going into this pooled vehicle, this investment vehicle, right? If you pay attention to what a lot of the experts have said, if you look at the HOOPP white paper, if you look at the—there has been a number of reports written around this PRPP. It's pretty clear that this is not the best way to be able to provide pension income for anyone in this province.

So I think it needs to be made clear to people, if the government does go forward with this, that, in fact, at the end of the day, it's really just an RRSP that you could have invested in yourself and you would have paid less management fees.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014, and to comment on some of the remarks made by the member from Welland.

Of course, this particular vehicle is just one of the many initiatives our government is taking, in addition, of course, to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that we are proposing. We're certainly saying that the PRPP is just one of a suite of voluntary opportunities for individuals. I talk to constituents in my riding from all of the four municipalities and what I hear from them is very clearly that they want choice in how they, in fact, provide for their retirement in terms of savings opportunities. So we have TFSAs. We have, hopefully, with this bill being passed, the PRPP to offer that kind of choice, particularly in the case of this plan, to small or medium-sized businesses that may not have the capacity to offer traditional pension plans.

We had a very interesting session in my riding. The Associate Minister of Finance wanted us to convene a group for her consultation on the ORPP, and we gathered together our chambers of commerce, the board of trade for Markham, a very wide representation—in fact, I was very pleased to see CUPE came to our consultation on the ORPP. What we heard consistently is that there was a desire, of course, not only to go ahead with the ORPP, but to offer choice, depending on circumstances. So this is just one of many initiatives, and I think it's going to be an exceptionally good one, if passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to stand in this House and, in this case, speak to Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act. Our expert in our caucus, the member from York-Simcoe, has done just a magnificent job on this. As a matter of fact, she introduced Bill 50 back in 2013. The Ontario PC caucus has been on the forefront of advancing the PRPPs for quite some time. The good news is that the government is now finally realizing that we've been on the right track all along and that people, in fact, do need options for retirement.

Now, one of the things I really like and appreciate about this particular plan is the fact that it's not mandatory. I think one of the things that needs to happen—and I know that for these pension plans to really begin to take effect, they need to probably be in effect for 20, 25, 30 years or so before someone actually begins to reap the benefits of such a program. So let's start it back in the schools. Let's teach children basic math, let's teach them finance, let's teach them how to manage, so they can learn how to save for their future. Of course, with this not being a mandatory program that's being forced upon them, I think it's a great idea.

Now, also, CFIB likes it because employers don't have to opt in to this particular program. But I do like the fact that it's going to give people options by not making

it mandatory to get in there. People don't like it when things are being forced upon them. Again, I think that it's important that Ontarians have a right to save for their retirement, and I think that these PRPPs would offer this to anyone actually in Ontario itself, including the self-employed, who don't always take care of themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to stand. To the comments of my colleague from Welland, she raised some great points about the real need of this plan for the average Ontarian, and the lack thereof. We know that people are in precarious work, we know that people aren't able to get jobs, and this is really going to do nothing for them.

She talked about Stelco—and that's from my home town, as you know and are from also, Speaker—and how the pensioners there are facing CCAA and there is no protection for their pensions. If we really wanted to do something for the people of this province, we would be trying to find a way to make sure that pensioners are at the top of the creditor list when it comes to companies who are bailing out on our country and just picking up and moving off.

The Minister of Community and Social Services talked about CUPE and their thoughts on this. My thoughts on CUPE today are with those who are not receiving the pay equity that they've been told they're supposed to get, and what the minister is thinking about making sure that her government is allowing these employers to keep their pay equity responsibilities. Yes, it's this minister's responsibility to make sure that she has those funds to allow that to happen.

Also, we have people in this province who are on OW and ODSP and are not able to get their paycheques just because the system has a failure. I think a lot of them will be going through the Easter weekend without any funds whatsoever until those paycheques can be spit out on Tuesday because of the fault of the SAMS program.

There are lots of things to talk about in this House. A pension plan that really could be substituted with an RRSP would probably do the job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to rise today in support of Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plan Act, 2014.

I'd like to acknowledge the comments made by some of the members in the House earlier, particularly the member from Welland and also Chatham-Kent. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that, in my opinion, this is really a very great initiative. Why? Because it's flexible; it gives people options. We know that the people of Ontario and the workers of Ontario are having challenges when it comes to saving for the future and saving for their retirement. We know that they need assistance when it comes to ensuring that they are prepared to face their senior years in the comfort that they very much deserve.

When it comes to employers and the self-employed individuals in our province, they aren't saving enough for

their retirement, because saving for the future can be challenging and difficult. This bill gives people the options that they need. It's low-cost, it's not mandatory, it's professionally managed and it's portable. That means that they can take it from place to place, so whether they're self-employed, whether they may be a contractual worker or a casual worker, they can really use this plan with other plans.

This is a great idea, and other provinces agree. I think it's time that Ontario and the people of Ontario started having an option like this, because this prepares our people and our workers for the future. We need to save now. As the member beside me earlier had said, this is really about preparing for the future and for our children. I think this bill, Bill 57, is a great way to ensure that our people in our province have the flexibility they need so that they can save in the way that they want to—save today so that they can prepare for a very comfortable future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland has two minutes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks, Speaker, and thanks to the Minister of Community and Social Services, the members from Chatham-Kent-Essex and Hamilton Mountain and the member from Halton. It's always good to have an opportunity to speak to these things, but I think one of the biggest single problems with this plan is private sector management fees. Canadians pay 2% or more for administration of their RRSPs, whereas the large public pension plans like CPP, OMERS and HOOPP pay well less than 1% for fund administration. Those high fees actually erode their returns.

We're talking about lower-, lower-middle- and middle-class people who can't afford to save or invest today themselves, and we're going to offer them a plan that is actually going to give them less in returns than they actually could have gotten if they had invested that money into RRSPs themselves. So I think that the scheme in some way misleads workers who will participate in this plan to think that they're actually going to be better off by investing in this plan when, in fact, they could have done better if they had the ability to do it, if they had a good job, if they had a permanent job that they could count on, to actually invest some money into their own tax-free savings account or into their own RRSP. That 1% of the \$80 billion of room in RRSPs would be going to them instead of going to banks and insurance companies in this province.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Beaches-East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. What a delight to have you in the chair today, keeping a measured and judicial order in the House today.

I'm sensing in my first year here in the House a certain thematic development with respect to retirement issues. We, on this side of the House, keep bringing forward important pieces of legislation that will help people in their retirement years.

We, of course, initially started with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. This was a plan that I campaigned on, as all our members did, and I'm sure if the members opposite were being really honest with themselves, they would have heard, as we did at the door, time and time again, what an incredible opportunity this was to have the ORPP. They would have heard that as we did.

So, true to the word, when we came back after what was once called the unnecessary election—which I've always disagreed with—

Applause.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much. Once we came back, we had an opportunity to bring that piece of legislation in. It's moving forward and it's in committee now, ready to be heard in clause-by-clause reading.

Then we went forward and we had Bill 70. Bill 70, by the honourable member who sits next to me, the member for Northumberland—Quinte West, my seatmate—oh, and I am sharing my time with the member from Scarborough Southwest; my apologies, Speaker—which is an act respecting protection of RSPs, retirement savings plans. We know how important that is all across Canada and other jurisdictions. When you put your money into retirement savings, should you be in bankruptcy or default, often through no fault of your own, by circumstances beyond your control, your retirement savings will be protected. That's an important piece of legislation, and that, too, has received unanimous support in this House and is moving forward to committee at the appropriate time.

Now we have Bill 57, the pooled registered retirement plan. The Minister for Community and Social Services spoke quite eloquently in her two-minute discussion about the suite of services that this is just one more addition to.

So many of us are planning for our retirement in different ways. Mortgages—it's a great way. Pay off your house and you have a place to live, if you are so lucky to be able to do so.

Mr. Mike Colle: You can't do that in Toronto with a million-dollar house.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, it depends on when you bought it.

Savings, guaranteed investment certificates or, as we talked about, the tax-free savings account—

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, it's so much fun when I get heckled by my own party. Does that happen often? Is that part of the experience I'm learning around here?

Others invest in stocks and bonds. We heard members opposite in the third party talking about how they wouldn't want to take a risk with a pooled registered retirement savings plan, because who knows what it looks like at the end? It's as if they don't understand the nature of investment.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Miss Monique Taylor): Would the member from Eglinton—Lawrence come to order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: You could just card him and send him out here. He's not even in his own seat. Enforce some order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Miss Monique Taylor): Order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: What happened? As soon as it's the last speaker, all of a sudden the place goes to rack and ruin.

Other people invest in stocks and bonds. The members opposite talk about not trusting the benefit at the end of the day with the registered retirement plan because of the pooled savings, but that's the nature of investments. If they're actually telling us they don't believe people should be investing, it just speaks to disasters in how they understand the way the financial world really works. Others invest in investment properties, investment businesses, and now we have this new vehicle, the pooled retirement pension plan.

We know this is not a replacement for a defined benefit plan like the ORPP or CPP or any other defined benefit plan through a place of employment. It's not a replacement; it is an option. It's a voluntary measure which is there to enhance employment security, and it must be understood as such.

When you appreciate that so many other jurisdictions across Canada have such a similar plan—BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and even Quebec have these plans. There's a federal plan. So it just absolutely makes sense that we, in Ontario, should get behind it and do this as well.

We had consultations on this program last year, about this time, in fact. We were going forward with the plan before the election, so it's no secret to anyone in the House or the people of Ontario that this was in the works. It wasn't something we campaigned on as such, because we knew that, for the most part, every one of the members in this House understood and appreciated the benefits of it and they would be supportive. So it has been heavily consulted on.

But what's really important about this plan, I think, from the perspective of an employer—as some of you may know, I have a master's degree in labour relations, and a good part of the work that I've done as a consultant was in labour relations and the importance of employee benefits. I know the members of the third party appreciate the benefits: statutory holidays, vacations with pay, cost-of-living adjustments to salaries.

A pooled pension plan opportunity for an employer is a great way to not only attract new employment to your firm but to retain employment. Isn't that what we really want to do? As employers, we create a working relationship with our employees where they feel appreciated. Using a vehicle like this is an important way of moving forward.

I think at this time, Mr. Speaker, if it's okay with you, I will turn over my time. I'm sharing it with the member from Scarborough Southwest. I'll give him an opportunity to say a few words before the time runs out for the session today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to be able to speak today on Bill 57, the Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act, 2014. I know we've been debating this all afternoon, but just for those who are tuning in now, it's a new type of voluntary tax-assisted individual retirement savings vehicle. The PRPPs are administered by licensed third-party administrators and regulated by financial institutions with investments pooled to reduce costs and improve returns.

We basically want to have a pension plan for people who will retire in the future. We all know that the Canada Pension Plan is not enough.

Mr. Mike Colle: Enough? It's a joke.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's more than a joke.

My colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence and I were talking earlier about how expensive it is to buy a house in Toronto. The average price now is \$1 million. There are young couples out there who have an \$800,000 mortgage on their house. If you do the math, it's going to take a long time to pay off that mortgage.

The member from across the aisle mentioned the fact that you can sell your house in Toronto and move to Welland.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm ready to go.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It could be a move to Welland. I don't know what the average price in Welland is but it sure has to be lower than \$1 million.

Mr. Mike Colle: And no traffic jams.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: And no traffic jams; there isn't gridlock there either.

Mr. Mike Colle: Welland; that's the place.

Laughter.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I hope Hansard doesn't record my laugh. This is serious.

He reminds me of my father. My father is 84 years old and he keeps asking me, "How are you going to pay off your mortgage? How are you going to pay off your mortgage?" A million-dollar house—and you don't get a huge house either, but we'll save that debate for another day.

I wanted to mention that there are a number of provinces that have passed legislation similar to what we want to do: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec. Basically it is to augment and help couples who will, in the future, retire.

I just want to say something about the present Canada Pension Plan. My dad is receiving it. He also receives Old Age Security. We were adding it up and it came to just over \$20,000. So you have a person living in Toronto by himself in a house—

Mr. Mike Colle: He worked for 40 years.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: He worked for 35 years at a lumber mill and he has to basically live on \$20,000 a year. You can't live on \$20,000 a year. Luckily, he saved money and he has other income from an RRSP. But you can't survive on \$20,000 a year.

I have a friend. He reached the age of 60—I'm being told by the Speaker to look at the time—

Mr. Mike Colle: Go ahead.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Go ahead and speak? You can cut me off any time, Mr. Speaker. But my friend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think I'll cut you off before you start laughing again. Thank you so much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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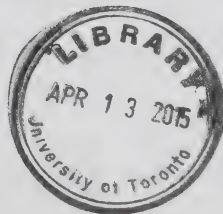
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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 2 April 2015

Jeudi 2 avril 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 April 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 avril 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 1, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / *Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Perth-Wellington had completed his speech. Therefore, we will continue further debate. The member from Huron-Bruce.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you guys putting anybody up?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay, very good. And we're off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You don't have to listen to him. Listen to me.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Very good. You don't carry the whip.

Good morning, Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate with regard to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. This is a piece of legislation that I welcome all efforts to improve, in terms of our efforts collectively here in the Legislature. Bill 45 addresses a number of things. It talks about banning the marketing of tobacco products to children, obesity and labelling menus with calorie counts. There are a number of things that we need to point out, in order to address them properly.

First is health care versus the deficit. This week, the Minister of Finance announced that the deficit has risen to \$10.9 billion. That's up half a billion dollars from last

year. When I hear an astronomical number such as this, I think of how it will affect our front-line services such as education and health care, which are two basic services that we need and two important components of this particular bill. While we have a government that cannot get its fiscal house in order, we see cuts where our services should be a priority: education and health care. It's happening across this province.

The Auditor General warned of this very thing. In her most recent report, she explained that Ontario's debt and deficit will result in a "crowding out" of spending on essential services. As I've said, we hear of nurses being cut across the province, we see a decline in services such as cutting off coverage for diabetes testing strips, cutting off physiotherapy for seniors, and cataract surgeries. I would suggest that this government has its priorities upside down, and they need to get their spending habits under control so that we can indeed focus on priority services. While I support this bill, Speaker, I have to tell you that I have not seen any evidence that builds my confidence in this government that it is prepared to balance this budget to ensure that essential services are available to protect our health care system.

A second point I need to make is on childhood obesity. In Ontario today, we have nearly one third of children and youth who are overweight or obese. This is a staggering number. Obesity can result in chronic diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart disease. There are reasons a child can experience obesity, from a socio-economic perspective or from family, individual and community factors, but it all boils down to the imbalance between food intake and physical activity.

By labelling menus with calorie count to make it a little bit easier for families to prepare healthier choices for their children—I see that as a step in the right direction but it cannot stop there. We need a strategy in place to make sure that children and youth can increase their physical activity. Keeping active for at least one hour a day lowers the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke and high blood pressure. We need more physical education within our school curriculums to ensure a healthier generation. We need a comprehensive plan moving forward to address this public health issue that we currently have on our hands.

I do have to recognize that this past fall I was pleased to learn that the county of Huron had been selected for the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. The Healthy Kids Community Challenge delivers programs and activities focused on promoting healthy eating, physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices. The county of

Huron will be receiving funding, training and marketing resources over the next four years from the province to support these local initiatives. This is an excellent opportunity to educate our youth on the importance of healthy living.

When doing research for this particular bill, I found that, according to the Health and Fitness Journal of Canada, in 2009, the cost associated with obesity in Ontario was \$4.5 billion. That's \$1.65 billion in direct health care costs and \$2.87 billion in indirect costs. We need to continue to invest in our children's health today. We need to allow for the sustainability of our health care system for tomorrow as well. Simply applying a label to food will certainly help, but it's not a solution.

Once again, we see industry in Ontario being proactive. We found that as many as 60% of restaurants voluntarily brought in calorie stickers—and again, how much red tape do we need to stifle industry initiatives? I worry about that and I raise a flag in that regard.

I see this industry constantly innovating and being proactive. With the introduction of Bill 75, the Microbead Elimination and Monitoring Act, I have to share with you that when the legislation was brought in, industry was already setting their own targets, many for 2017, to entirely eliminate microbeads from their products. Again, that's another example of industry leading by example.

I'd also like to talk to you about what the agri-food industry is doing in terms of being proactive and working toward bringing awareness and education to the classroom outside of government legislation. There's an organization called the Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc. Commodity organizations in this province support OAFE so that they can develop curriculum for teachers to use in the classroom to educate people about how food production is initiated in this province and, more importantly, healthy eating. That's why we need to have the Legislature in this province recognize what industry is already doing outside of legislation. We can't stifle that innovation.

When I think about healthy eating and healthy lifestyles, I really think it's going to be important. When I come back to my private member's initiative later this fall, I'm going to be introducing a motion to gently nudge this government to make mandatory in grade 9 and 10 guidance and career education curriculum a component talking about the agri-food industry, the food that's produced in Ontario. Ultimately, that leads to awareness of healthy living and healthy eating. I hope, when you look at all the different pieces of legislation coming together to support a healthy lifestyle, that this government also recognizes the importance that my private member's initiative will bring and why it's important to support it as well.

With that, I would like to carry on about the banning of marketing of tobacco products to children. According to StatsCan, in Canada today we have nearly 5.8 million smokers. Although this is fewer than a decade ago, it is still a high number. Of that, one in 10 15- to 17-year-

olds, which equals about 121,000 kids, were smokers in 2011. I think this is unacceptable. But one promising fact within this is that the smoking rate fell rapidly among teenagers in the last decade.

0910

Smoking is the leading cause of premature death in Canada, and recent studies have estimated that 21% of all deaths over the past decade are indeed due to smoking. Anything we can do to reduce these numbers is a step in the right direction.

I've been a long-standing advocate for lung health, Speaker, and I'm very pleased to be a member of the lung health caucus here at Queen's Park. Just this past summer, I was pleased to sign the lung health action plan, which called upon government to establish an action plan.

I will tip my hat to the member from Cambridge for bringing forth Bill 41, the Lung Health Act, which I was pleased to support and speak to. I appreciated how Bill 41 will ensure that individuals with lung disease and informal caregivers are included in discussions and decisions surrounding their health. This is definitely a step in the right direction.

Another step that I was very pleased to see happen is that this government finally was getting out of the way and allowing people access to drugs that are needed. I'd like to give my regards to Hugh Detzler. Hugh Detzler was a tremendous advocate for a drug called Esbriet, which improves lung health for folks experiencing idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. I want to say thank you to Hugh. He had to pay out of his own pocket for this drug. Unfortunately, by the time it became available in Ontario, it was too late for Hugh, and Hugh underwent a lung transplant. He is currently in Toronto, and I wish him the very best over this Easter weekend. Easter represents new beginnings, and I hope there are some parallels there with regard to his new lung and the next chapter in his life, and I hope it's healthy and happy for him and his family.

Speaker, we need to continue on this path. From all parties' perspectives, we need to work together to ensure that we can achieve a healthier population. I think that this legislation is important. I support it. It's a step in the right direction, but there's so much more we can do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for those comments.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the comments from the member from Huron—Bruce. She raised some valid points.

I think, in general, members of the House support the thrust of the bill. We all want to ensure that we have a healthier society. One of our main roles here, as legislators, is to review what the functions of not only us, as legislators—but how it cross-sects with the demands of our constituents.

Interjection: Tell them about your daughter at the dentist.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay, I'll tell you the story about my daughter at the dentist. My daughter went to

the dentist and had a great day, a great checkup—no cavities. She did really well.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: She does have a million-dollar smile.

When she was done, the dentist went to give her a coupon for maybe a Happy Meal at McDonald's. She looked up at him from the dentist's chair and said, "What are you doing? Trying to kill me? I don't want to eat that." She is conscious about her health and the nutritional value of the food that we have around us. Maybe the dentist was taken aback. He should be handing out apples and fresh fruit—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —or toothpaste or something. But it goes to show you how consciousness is shifting, certainly in the next generation. We want good, healthy, wholesome food, we want to know where it comes from, and we want to protect the sources.

We met with members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I want to give them a shout-out for all they do in protecting our food source, food security and, ultimately, food sovereignty. We need to know where it comes from and understand and value the process of our food production.

With that, I thank the members for their attention.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I appreciate the comments from the members from Essex and Huron—Bruce.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults, and a—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Can we keep the noise down? There are about 10 conversations going on. I'm having trouble hearing the person speaking. Please.

Continue.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, a healthy start is better for our kids, and it is better for our health care system. That is why our government has re-introduced this legislation, which will make it easier for our families to make informed and healthy food choices.

This bill has been debated over 11 hours, and all parties support this bill. I think it's time to refer it to committee so that it can be debated in committee and so we can hear from stakeholders, and it can come back with necessary amendments and pass third reading so that families and children can get the benefit of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to have a few moments to speak. With all due respect to the previous speaker, the member for Brampton-Mississauga South—sorry, I flipped them the wrong way; I got the municipal name mixed up. I just want you to know, Speaker, that we still have 17 members in our caucus who haven't spoken to this bill. In fact, five of them are here with me

in the House this morning: Mr. Arnott, Mr. Fedeli, Mr. Harris, Ms. MacLeod and Mrs. Martow. They're all here; they're all very enthusiastic to speak to this bill. This is a very important bill, it covers many different topics, and in the very few minutes we have left this morning—we only have 58 minutes left before the House has a recess before question period—I would hope, and I would ask, that we be allowed to speak to this very important bill.

I spoke to this bill on Monday and got out a lot of concerns that some of my constituents had about the bill. Obviously there is a lot of support, as well, for the bill in the riding. I've had a number of individuals speak to me about Bill 45 and about ensuring that it gets to committee.

Again, I'm a little skeptical. This bill will probably get, for the most part, all-party support here this morning; there might be some who don't agree. However, what we saw this week with the government on another bill—the transportation bill, Bill 31—is that the opposition put many, many reasonable amendments to that bill, and the government members voted every single amendment down.

So I guess I'm looking for some direction from the government when they decide to speak on this bill: Are they going to hear the other side, are they going to listen to the opposition, and are we going to be able to take some of the comments we've heard from our constituents, put them through as amendments and make the bill better? That's my question to the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to be able to stand in my place this morning on behalf of my residents in the riding of Windsor—Tecumseh and speak to Bill 45.

We, on this side of the House, like to think that the "G" in G45 actually stands for "Gélinas." After bringing forth 11 private member's bills over six years, dealing with healthy eating choices, dealing with restrictions on tobacco, certainly the member from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, has brought a certain fierceness to this debate, a certain—she won't give up on it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's time that it's at the House; it's time that we're at this level, making decisions on making healthy choices and cutting back on flavoured tobacco. We all have paid it lip service over the years, but finally it looks like we're all headed in the same direction and are almost prepared to get on with it. That's what I'm hoping we will do.

There are still a few weaknesses in the bill, Speaker, as you've heard before. I don't know why, for example, sodium content on menu labelling isn't part of this bill. We can all count calories, and goodness knows I should be counting more than I have; I respect that. But sodium content is just as bad. If we're going to get serious—if we really want to do the right thing by all the people in Ontario—we should improve the bill to make sure that the sodium content of a meal is also included. More often

than not, some of the fast-food choices I make have more than the daily recommended count of sodium or salt in that meal. I try to think of it more now than I did in the past, but I know if it was right in front of me perhaps I would be making that better choice.

0920

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Huron–Bruce. You have two minutes for your reply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I really appreciate everyone's comments, particularly the member from Leeds–Grenville, in the sense that it's important that we have time to debate this bill. Bill 45 is an important piece of legislation that we all deserve the right to speak to.

As I mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to speak about the healthy lifestyles initiative that the county of Huron will be participating in. It's an opportunity, as we debate bills, to talk about the good things that are happening in our riding as well.

Just to revisit, banning of the marketing of tobacco products to children is an important step, but we also need to shut down illegal smoke shacks.

I appreciate all the comments from the members, particularly from Essex. I love the fact that his daughter is challenging people to ensure that she's receiving healthy lifestyle tips and that she is raising awareness for other professionals as well. I like that. It's a two-way street in terms of what we need to be doing.

But I would still like to take a moment to say we need to do more. Industry are innovators. They're taking the lead and doing so many things on a voluntary basis. I was just speaking to the member from Cambridge and a representative of the Ontario Lung Association. I was sharing how in my area, in terms of lung health, farmers are coming together with health researchers to figure out how to move forward to ensure healthy lifestyles and protect their lung health. That's another example of how industry is indeed moving forward without interference from government. We can't stifle that. No matter what we do, we always have to ensure that the red-tape burden is at minimum so that our industry can do the best and be the best they can be in this province.

Again, just to conclude, you know what? We need to move forward with physical activity in schools and healthy lifestyles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm going to warn members again: There are many, many conversations going on, and if I can't keep it quiet, I'll single you out.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I just heard recently—I want to inform the government House leader that it is my hope and my intention to speak to Bill 45—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm sorry to inform the member that that's not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: It's a pleasure to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 45. I, of course, wanted to be

able to speak to this bill. My colleague was cut off briefly there, but I know the member for Wellington–Halton Hills as well would like to speak to Bill 45 on behalf of his constituents. I know he couldn't get that out, and I wanted to make that point. As well, my colleague for Thornhill—we were fighting over who was going to speak this morning on this. I know she too would like to speak to this on behalf of her constituents.

This is a bill that concentrates on, obviously, three pieces of legislation: the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014, requiring fast-food restaurants to display the calorie counts for their menu items; the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, primarily to prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes; and then there's the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014, which brings in a number of restrictions on e-cigarettes, or electronic cigarettes, which include banning their sale to anyone under 19 and restricting display and promotion of e-cigarettes, much like we do today with the regular, more conventional cigarette products.

You know, when I spoke to one of the predecessors of this bill last year, Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, I spoke about the many influences that encourage youth to smoke: peers, the media, actors and other entertainers. Again, I would like to spend most of my time concentrating on the youth smoking aspects of the bill today.

I spoke last year of the need, as parents and as government, to ensure those influences are countered by our own influence to encourage healthy decisions. Frankly, as I noted then, it's our responsibility to teach our young people about the effects of smoking. You only need to look at the statistics, which show that children are more likely to smoke if their parents do, to understand the impact and influence of our decisions as adults on choices our young people make. Speaker, I don't smoke; that's my choice. As a parent, I sure hope that my kids don't grow up and smoke either. I will be making them aware of that each and every day.

Fortunately, statistics also show that the percentage of kids and teens who smoke has declined in recent years, which is great news. According to a Youth Smoking Survey in Canada, 2% of youth in grades 5 to 9, and 11% of those in grades 10 to 12, reported that they were current smokers. Speaker, grade 5 is an awfully young age to be smoking—even grades 10 to 12. Of kids in grades 5 to 9, 82% of youth have never tried it, and thank God for that. By grades 10 to 12, 52% of youth reported that they still hadn't tried it at all. I think those stats are moving in the right direction. That said, while those numbers are improving, there is still room for further improvement. The trends are heading in the right direction, and today's bill will help those numbers get smaller. According to the Youth Smoking Survey, more than half of children will still try tobacco.

I have three young boys at home. I feel it's so important to teach them the dangers of cigarettes, and I hope that they make the healthy decision not to smoke as they grow older. I would encourage all parents to open up that

conversation with their children and keep that communication going as they grow up into teenagers and young adults.

Those conversations are essential, but no matter the communication and conversations, the temptations are always there. I regret the fact that one of the main sources of temptation is not even addressed by this bill. I speak of contraband tobacco, a huge contributor to youth smoking which cannot be taken lightly. According to the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco, there are more illegal cigarettes in Ontario than anywhere else in the country.

I've had the opportunity to meet with folks from the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco, and remember they had done a study at one of the local high schools. They collected the cigarette butts found in front of the school, and a good percentage of the tobacco butts they found were in fact contraband. This is an alarming issue that needs to be dealt with.

We talk about increasing the fines on the sale of tobacco products to underagers. It's important to start to crack down on youth smoking, but it doesn't go far enough towards stopping the sale of cigarettes out of the back of someone's truck in the parking lot of a high school or in someone's university dorm room.

They often say that contraband tobacco is fairly easy to get. You see the vans driving up and down the street, bringing the cigarettes right to the establishment or right to the schools in our own communities. I know that a lot of the stores do their best to ask for IDs and crack down on it at the store, but there's so much contraband going on, simply out of a van, that we need to deal with that.

I remember my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk suggesting that the province put an end to illegal tobacco and smoke shacks by increasing enforcement and reducing tobacco taxes. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has said that when this took place in the early 1990s, 300 smoke shacks vanished on the Six Nations overnight.

Illegal cigarettes pose an incredible threat to the health of our young people. These cigarettes are sold by criminals through a network of drug dealers, which can give greater access for youth to cigarettes, cigarillos, cigars, chewing tobacco and other products.

The price for 200 illegal cigarettes can range from \$4 to \$8. The low price of illegal cigarettes makes them incredibly attractive to smokers, especially young smokers, who may not be able to afford the legal product.

It is clear that Ontario has an illegal cigarette problem. It has been estimated that one of every three cigarettes in Ontario is illegal. A failure to combat the problem of contraband cigarettes will lead to better-funded organized crime and increased health care costs. This is a serious problem, which is why important organizations such as the Retail Council of Canada, Crime Stoppers, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have called for government's attention to address the situation.

Instead of addressing contraband cigarettes, this act turns to the issue of e-cigarettes. In fact, this piece of

legislation would ban and restrict the sale, promotion and use of e-cigarettes, similar to tobacco. I think we all agree that we need to limit the exposure of our young people to tobacco, but I am also aware that there is a debate regarding how much of a health risk e-cigarettes actually pose.

0930

Some studies have shown that a puff of e-cigarette with the highest nicotine content contains 20% of the nicotine contained in a puff of a conventional cigarette. One fifth of the conventional cigarette is a significant reduction. I have also received countless emails from constituents who found that e-cigarettes are a healthier alternative to tobacco smoking. Some have even used it as an aid to actually quit smoking. The fact is, we simply don't have all the facts here when it comes to e-cigarettes. We simply do not know enough about this new technology. Without that data, that information, it may be too early to create regulations regarding e-cigarettes.

Speaker, there's little doubt that ultimately smoking is an issue that affects us all. We all have a friend or a family member who has gotten sick or even passed away. It's a sad and terrible thing to see, and I wish it upon no one. I believe that it's important to continue educating our young people of the dangers of smoking.

If you can only imagine, it was not too long ago when folks smoked in bars. In fact, you have to look at airplanes: a smoke-free environment. The thought that at one time, back in the day, folks were smoking on airplanes—we've certainly come a long way.

I can recall when I was in school, out occasionally the odd night, coming home with cigarette burns in my clothes just drove me crazy. We don't have to worry about that anymore. To get here it required a lot of work, work that continues as we look to keep our young people away from harmful second-hand smoke.

As I noted off the top, while Bill 45 aims to properly address youth smoking it also seeks to give more information to Ontarians who are simply looking to make healthier choices.

To be clear: Ontarians are looking for that information to make healthier choices. In fact, approximately 95% of Ontarians supported requiring fast-food restaurants to list their nutritional information on the menus, according to Ipsos.

If Bill 45 is passed, it will require owners and operators of regulated food services premises to display the number of calories in each standard food item sold at their premises. When we're talking about regulated food service premises, we're talking about the places that sell meals for immediate consumption. I believe the common term is "fast-food restaurant," of course. I think at the end of the day we can all understand the importance of making informed decisions when standing in line at a chain with 20 or more Ontario locations, or that are brought under this act by regulators.

I do see that I'm almost running out of time and I'll conclude at that. I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues and then wrap it up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say, up is down and down is up. These days we have Liberals talking like Conservatives and now we've got Conservatives talking about regulations. I tell you: This whole place is getting rather interesting.

I just want to put something on the record and I hope people take it for what it is. I think the bill is a good step forward. I think the point was made: by ensuring that restaurants of certain sizes post what calories you're going to be eating and what's good and bad as far as what's on the menu—it's a good thing because it allows the person to make a choice.

But really, this is the point that I want to make: You can try to regulate as much as you want but the biggest effect you're going to have is when you affect people's behaviour. The best way to affect people's behaviour is by education.

I look at where we are today compared to what we were 20 years ago when it comes to people's choices when it comes to health. What has really driven people to go to the gym, be more cautious about what they eat, what their lifestyle is, has been a constant bombardment of stuff that we saw on television, radio, within the papers, everything from—you remember participation, the federal program that encouraged people to get out and walk and take a bike, to various ads that we see that are more or less encouraging people to live healthier lifestyles.

I guess my point is this: We can try to regulate, but at the end of the day, regulation, unless it's done in co-operation with some type of advertising in order to affect people's choices, is really for naught. I think that's what we're trying to do with this particular bill: to make sure that we give people the information so that they're able to make the choices on how to live healthy.

Now, I can't understand what people see in some of these fast-food restaurants. I want to tell you, I've been in a few before—worst thing you ever can do for your health. I just encourage people to try to stay away from those places—bad food.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend the member from Kitchener—Conestoga on his remarks. I certainly agree with him, and I think we're on the same page on this—and the member for Timmins—James Bay, as well.

This is an important issue. Any of us who have had to quit smoking know how hard it is. I'm an ex-smoker. I was one of these guilt-ridden anglophones growing up in Montreal, and all my friends were French and cool, and I was guilt-ridden for hundreds of years of oppression. The way we compensated was we drank a lot of coffee and smoked Gauloises. It was one of ways an Anglo kid from the suburbs could be cool with their French university peers in downtown Montreal in the heyday of Quebec nationalism.

But anyway, I did quit. One of my buddies, on New Year's Eve, when I was 26 years old—we drank an enormous amount of Scotch and smoked an entire carton

of Russian cigarettes. It was very successful aversion therapy. I was so sick, for three months after, that I have never smoked since. But I'm glad that in 2014, we have much more progressive and less severe ways in which to quit smoking.

I would like to say one thing. I know my friend from Kitchener—Conestoga is not a big fan of red tape, and is one of those people in the House who, quite rightly, argues government should move more quickly and be less bureaucratic. I'm hoping he and his colleagues, since we seem to have—we've had over eight hours of debate now. We have, I think, unanimous agreement on this. Everyone wisely shares in the credit for this. So I'm hoping that maybe we can get this to committee.

I think that by using my particular technique of quitting smoking, several people could have quit by now, using the Murray aversion therapy Russian-cigarette process.

Mr. Speaker, since we are all concerned about young folks, let's try to get this bill passed, so we can get better supports for people of all ages who would like to quit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to get up just to speak for a couple of minutes and make some comments, because it doesn't look like I'm going to get a chance to speak to this bill directly.

We all know that we can all do better. We can all live healthier. We're all trying to set a good example for the next generation. I think that this generation is learning a lot in school about, certainly, saying no to drugs. We don't see drinking and driving being the issue that it once was.

But we also need to recognize that just making rules and just making regulations often isn't enough. We have to look at the illegal tobacco industry, which is providing very cheap cigarettes, often without filters, to our youth. I feel that this government isn't doing enough to address that problem. And I'm surprised, because we all know that we're running a bigger and bigger deficit every year, and there is certainly revenue to be made if the cigarettes were being sold legally. So if you're going to allow cigarettes on our streets to our youth, you'd think that you would want to recoup as much tax as possible.

In terms of listing calories for restaurants—especially, obviously, large-chain fast-food restaurants—well, there's more to it than just calories. We also have to consider the fat content and how the food was prepared.

I recall somebody who was a member of my family arguing—you couldn't even have the discussion—that a potato is a potato, and it doesn't matter if it's baked or if it's fried in a french fry. Obviously, this is somebody who went through the Canadian school system and didn't get the education, in terms of food preparation and healthy eating, that I believe this generation is getting.

We can do more. I think it really is about setting an example in education.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to add comments to what the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, the Minister of Transportation and the member from Thornhill have already stated. I had the opportunity to stand and speak at some length about this the other day, and I'll just summarize what I had said then.

I think it's important to note what the member from Thornhill said about educating kids around healthy eating and around the downfall of smoking.

0940

It was interesting, because there was a member from the government side the other day who talked about e-cigarettes and the importance they have in helping those who would traditionally smoke tobacco cigarettes and being able to stop that unhealthy habit. He had made reference to some of them having aromas such as bread baking. I had pointed out at the time that when we're looking at kids, not only do they model what they see from their parents, but when we have things that give off an aroma that's pleasing, it's more enticing for kids to want to use it. So I think there definitely needs to be some sort of control around access to those particular items for kids so that they're not going to use e-cigarettes to then progress on to tobacco cigarettes down the road. There definitely needs to be an education piece and some sort of control around kids having access to e-cigarettes, because we certainly don't want them to pick up the smoking habit.

I think it's also important that kids have access to healthy foods at home, but also at school, and that they have access to community schools that they can walk to and are not being bused 45 minutes to an hour away and not getting the daily exercise that they need. They need to have the education piece around choosing healthy foods. I think labelling menus in the large chain restaurants is a great place to start to help parents educate their kids on making healthy choices as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments. I now return to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to thank those who chimed in there, the member for Timmins–James Bay, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, my colleague the member from Thornhill and finally the member for Windsor West.

I have to say, off the top, I somewhat enjoyed the comments from the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Luckily we only gave him two minutes to talk about those wild days of his when he was in his early twenties or we could have been in for a real story, perhaps. But he obviously had to learn the hard way; I chose just to avoid it. Perhaps I had better things to spend my money on. I hope that my kids do the same—focus their time and energy in other places.

You see young athletes today—I was with a gentleman whose son is 14. He wouldn't even go out to have wings with his dad one night because he was conscious about the calories he was taking in, let alone filling his body with carcinogens and other things. I think our youth

are getting the message, similar to what my colleague mentioned about impaired driving. Through proper promotion, kids are getting the message that this is the wrong thing to do and that it is not a healthy choice.

You know, I'm a big fan, obviously, of a smoke-free environment now in our restaurants, our airplanes and even on our sports fields where kids are playing—to ensure that they're going to have to go somewhere else. It's a choice that they make. It's one that I make, not to smoke, and I don't want to be subject to second-hand smoke as well.

But I do want to get on the record that I had the fortunate pleasure of meeting with Heart and Stroke just last week. I told them that I would be speaking to the bill. I'm glad I've had the opportunity to. I hope that my colleagues do as well because our stakeholders like to know, see, hear and read the comments that we make about important pieces of legislation like this. So I thank you for the opportunity to bring my 10 minutes today. I'll conclude at that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's always a delight, the opportunity for me to speak on Bill 45 this morning, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

I just want to give a little context. During my time when I was a city councillor in the great city of Peterborough, from 1985 to the fall of 2003, the city of Peterborough was one of the first municipalities in the province of Ontario to develop an anti-smoking bylaw. I remember clearly that we had extensive consultations throughout the community. I think they lasted for almost 12 months. Then we got the bylaw put in place. A good friend of mine had a very distinguished career in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Dr. Garry Humphreys; he was our MOH in Peterborough. I know my colleague, Dr. Helena Jaczek, the Minister of Community and Social Services was a colleague of Garry Humphreys. Garry was very determined. He was a bright guy, and as a military guy, it was a little like planning a major military operation. He brought that kind of focus to the issue of reducing smoking within the county and city of Peterborough, working with Mayor Sylvia Sutherland. Mayor Sutherland was the longest-serving mayor in the history of Peterborough. I know my good friend from Northumberland–Quinte West is well versed on the great leadership qualities of Ms. Sutherland, who now serves Ontario so ably as a member of the Ontario Municipal Board. It was during her leadership that we finally got the first anti-smoking bylaw in place, the first in the province of Ontario. The Peterborough bylaw, essentially, became the template for right across the province of Ontario. Dr. Humphreys, working with other MOHs right across the province, of course, collectively decided that smoking and the reduction of smoking would be very, very helpful for the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Of course, we've advanced since then. Bill 45 builds on that work.

Mr. Speaker, as I like to tell audiences when I'm in my hometown of Peterborough—by the way, happy Eas-

ter to everybody; there are going to be great events over the weekend in Peterborough—we always stand on the shoulders of others, so Bill 45 is essentially that. We're standing on the shoulders of others. Members on all sides here, the opposition and third party, collectively, have come together in terms of Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

Just last Sunday, I was at the Independent grocery store on Lansdowne Street East in Peterborough. It's perhaps a stone's throw from my home. Dave Morello, a wonderful guy, is the franchise owner of Morello's Independent Grocer. I recommend to all members of this House that if they ever get to Peterborough, visit Morello's grocery store on Lansdowne Street East. It's right beside the Pioneer gas bar, with the cheapest gas in Peterborough. So if you want to fill up your tank and get your groceries, you can do it all at one time.

What's interesting when you're in the grocery stores today is how the consumer public is taking the time to look at labels. That's why labels are so important. Everywhere I go, whether it's canned foods, fresh foods, processed foods, everybody is looking at labels to see the content of the food they are consuming. That is a great step forward. I know that's happening.

Last Friday, I had the distinct pleasure of being at the Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards. There were winners from right across the province of Ontario, but there's one thing in common: They want to make sure that Ontarians, whether you're in Halton Hills or Arthur, Ontario, or Forest, Ontario, all those great communities that people now—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Windsor, Ontario; Oshawa—who else wants to get on here?

Mr. Steve Clark: Athens.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Athens—my good friends in Athens. Everybody is taking the opportunity to look at labels because they want to know all about the food they're consuming, and Bill 45 is certainly an important step forward in making that happen.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of other public awareness, certainly the Local Food Act—and I always like to commend my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton. Mr. Bailey did an incredible job with the food donation tax credit, and he deserves recognition for that. Everywhere I go, I always identify Mr. Bailey's great work here. What has happened through that? Commodity groups in Ontario, whether it's Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the egg producers of Ontario or Ontario Pork, are all taking advantage of that tax credit to make sure that healthy, nutritious food is available to our food banks right across the province of Ontario. On all sides of this House, we all have a commitment. We know there are folks in all of our communities across the province of Ontario who face some challenges, and we want to make sure they have the opportunity to have access to fresh, nutritious food, and the food donation tax credit that was championed by Mr. Bailey is making that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deviate for a moment here. My good friends, my advisers next to the chair, now tell me I

have to make the case for closure. So now I will make the case for closure.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I have many members who are sitting here, ready to speak to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will advise the member that that is not a point of order.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The honourable gentleman from Leeds–Grenville is a great guy. Oh, gosh—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to say that I've enjoyed the speech by the Minister of Agriculture and Food this morning. He's had a chance to speak on behalf of his constituents about Bill 45 today. I am asking him for that same opportunity. I'm asking him not to move closure. There are at least two members of our caucus who are present right now in the House, prepared and ready to speak to this bill. The government is routinely—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'll advise you that that's not a point of order.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I have profound respect for my good friend and colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. I keep trying to work with him to get his highway fixed, Highway 6—

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, I'm sorry. Now the case for closure, here.

We have reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill, and we allowed the debate to continue so that more members would have the opportunity to present on the bill, and all the members support. This bill has received a phenomenal amount of debate—11 hours. That is incredible.

Let me tell you, I've always believed that we should have an active democracy in this Legislature. According to my count, 65 very distinguished members have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. That's great.

I believe that there has been considerable debate on this bill. We've heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives from the opposition, the third party and government benches. It is time that this bill be put to a vote for second reading and, hopefully, be referred to committee, where the real work in this Legislature takes place.

As members know, in committee, members from all parties will hear from all presenters, who will add their invaluable opinion and perspective. Also in committee, members from all three parties will have an opportunity to move important amendments to strengthen this already very good piece of legislation.

At the same time, this House can move on to debate substantive issues. There are a number of pieces of im-

portant legislation, already introduced, which the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process. Mr. Speaker, for those who are listening in Peterborough this morning, let me give you that list:

—Bill 6, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, something I know the opposition wants;

—Bill 9, Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act: very important;

—Bill 37, Invasive Species Act: We've got to get rid of that Asian carp that might be invading the Great Lakes;

—Bill 52, Protection of Public Participation Act, known as the anti-SLAPP legislation;

—Bill 73—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I believe the member is filibustering his own motion.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

To the minister again, and would you speak to the bill.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I know that everybody on this side wants me to conclude.

We'd like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we can't until Bill 45 has been dealt with. As a result, I now move that the question be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Leal has moved that the question now be put. Considering the hours that this particular bill has been debated, and the number of members who have spoken to it, I'm going to allow the question.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I know this is a riveting day in the Ontario Legislature before the Easter weekend, so I'll rise and say we want to proceed to government order G80.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and the Animals for Research Act with respect to the possession and breeding of orcas and administrative requirements for animal care / *Projet de loi 80, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario et la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche en ce qui concerne la possession et l'élevage d'épaulards ainsi que les exigences administratives relatives aux soins dispensés aux animaux.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When this item of business was last debated, we had completed questions and comments on the speech of the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'll be sharing my time with the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Ottawa South and Scarborough Southwest.

I'm delighted to be able to speak for a few minutes on this bill. It's a very important bill. I think it's one that touches on ethics and morals. I know that others have quoted from people like Gandhi, who, to summarize, said something along the lines of, "We're measured by how well we treat those who can't take care of themselves." I certainly believe that.

Mr. Speaker, animal welfare is a key priority for the residents of Newmarket–Aurora. When we posted this bill to our page, we got incredible input from residents of Newmarket–Aurora who were very supportive of the fact that we were moving ahead to protect orcas and other marine animals. I'd say it's been the second- or third-best-read article on our website and probably in the top two or three items that people are in touch with us about all the time.

It goes without saying that marine mammals are complex and magnificent creatures. If you've ever seen them in the wild—and I've had the opportunity to do that off the coast of BC. They're phenomenal animals. They have unique needs that require the right standard of care. That's why this government has introduced the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act, otherwise known as Bill 80. If passed, Bill 80 would prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario, and I think that's a good thing. The people of Newmarket–Aurora are telling me that they think that's a great thing.

The bill would create a framework to establish animal welfare committees, as recommended in Dr. Rosen's report. These committees would ensure the planning, protection and oversight for the animals' care: things like animal care plans, access to veterinarians with expertise in marine mammals, and enhanced record-keeping. Our government is putting in place the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity in Canada. Our government is committed to the strongest possible standards of care and protection for marine mammals in captivity because that's what Ontarians expect, and it's what these amazing animals deserve. As I said earlier, I have certainly heard from the residents

of Newmarket–Aurora that they believe in this legislation.

This legislation builds on our existing protections and follows through on our government's commitment to develop the best standards and protections for marine mammals in captivity. We're not stopping with this legislation; we're taking the next step. We're establishing a technical advisory group of scientific experts, industry, enforcement and advocacy to give advice to us on the final, enhanced standards of care. In his report, Dr. Rosen outlined what elements those standards should govern in terms of light, sound, water quality and enclosure size. We look forward to hearing the advice, discussion and feedback of all interested parties.

The proposed standards of care will be posted publicly for comment this spring, we hope, before being enacted by regulation in the summer of 2015. Facilities with marine mammals in Ontario would need to adhere to the new standards. Both the legislation and the process we're going through with the technical advisory group are about ensuring that Ontario has the best standards of care possible for marine mammals. These enhanced standards will give the public confidence that these magnificent creatures are being properly cared for and protected.

The government has had the opportunity to meet with many of our partners on this issue. I'm optimistic about Marineland's willingness to work with us as we move to ensure that we have the best standards of care in place and they remain a strong part of Niagara's economy.

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I just wanted to touch on a couple of facts and figures. Some of the questions that have surfaced around the orca prohibition debate—one of the questions is, how will people who violate the orca prohibition be punished? I can tell you the proposal. Six months after royal assent, a person found to possess an orca that was acquired after the introduction of the bill would be liable, on conviction, to a fine of not more than \$60,000 and imprisonment of up to two years—pretty profound, Mr. Speaker.

How will the ban be enforced? The OSPCA would be empowered to enforce the new standards of care and orca prohibitions, based on their existing authority under the OSPCA Act to enforce any law in force in Ontario "pertaining to the welfare of or the prevention of cruelty to animals."

The proposed bill would not grant OSPCA inspectors additional powers to investigate, but it would allow them to enforce, using the general provisions.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to stand today and speak on this very important bill—important for a number of reasons, but, I think, primarily above them, it's a very moral bill that we've introduced to make sure that orcas are treated well and that we have no more of them moved to Ontario.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would turn the spotlight to our member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for his comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Who are the orcas, and why do they matter? Mr. Speaker, these are some of the most beautiful and majestic animals on the earth. They are very large. They're very complex. They're very intelligent. They matter in that we should be humane to all living beings, but particularly to such tremendous creatures that live in the wild and who rightfully should only live in the wild.

Some of the most passionate interactions I have with my constituents are when they raise issues of animal welfare, whether it be for domestic animals or for animals in the wild. That is why, for our government, the treatment of animals is very important.

In my own home, my wife, Rose, and my daughter, Ariana, are self-described animal advocates, so my position on this today is something that's going to be very closely scrutinized by all of my constituents, including those at home.

This legislation will build on our existing protections and follows through on our government's commitment to develop the best standards and protection for marine mammals in captivity. If passed, Bill 80 will prohibit the breeding and acquisition of orca whales in Ontario, and it will dramatically improve conditions for all captive marine mammals. This is about ensuring that Ontario has the best standards of care possible for marine mammals.

I'm very pleased that the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act includes a fine of up to \$60,000 and/or two years in prison on the first conviction for either breeding or buying and selling orcas. This is very important, Mr. Speaker, because it's important, when we pass legislation, that it has teeth to it, real penalties for those who would try to go against the intent of the legislation.

Also, the minister will be working on a series of additional improvements regarding the care of marine mammals. This will include better standards for larger enclosures, water quality inspections, higher standards for noise and lighting as well as improved standards for the handling and display of these mammals. Those changes are expected in approximately six months.

I'm pleased that if this legislation is passed, it will make Ontario the first Canadian jurisdiction to have specific standards for the care of marine animals.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is not stopping at this legislation to ensure that we increase standards of care for marine mammals. We're moving forward with action to establish a technical advisory group of scientific experts, industry, enforcement and advocacy groups to give advice on the final enhanced standards of care.

It's very encouraging to hear support for this legislation coming from my colleagues in the third party. I'm very pleased to see that they do see the bigger picture here.

I know that the question has been raised as to why we're focusing on orcas in this legislation. That's because these are particularly complex and extraordinary animals and exceptionally large. There is no way to establish human-built habitats for them that would be

acceptable. As we get a better understanding of the science behind these animals, it's clear that we need to take action and enact a ban on the breeding and acquisition of orcas in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there's much more that can be said on this, but I am sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South, so I'll allow him to build upon the remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure today to speak to Bill 80, essentially an act to protect marine mammals.

It's very encouraging to hear the debate—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, Free Willy.

As the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore said, "Who are the orcas?"

It's interesting that we've always had relationships with the animals that we share this planet with. We often have to get to the point where we realize that they're there, that we have a special relationship with them and that things like very large animals being kept in very tight quarters—I think the member from Algoma—Manitowlin mentioned, how would we react if we went by a house in a yard where you had my lab, Jackie, on a three-foot chain? She's meant to be out and running. That's what we're looking at.

I think, if you listen to the debate, we have a very close relationship with animals. We want to make sure that we respect them, that we treat them humanely. This bill moves to do that and moves to not only ban the purchase and breeding of orcas here in Ontario but also to make sure that we establish a committee that's going to ensure the protection of marine mammals.

My daughter is probably not listening. I think it's important that we have a relationship and that we have places like Marineland for the educational purpose. It had captured her imagination. She's now 36. We unfortunately have never got there. I just want to tell her this morning, I promise we'll get there. She hasn't forgiven me yet. But she was very captured by the whales. I think that she understands now that keeping animals in those kind of quarters isn't fair to them. That's the humane thing to do. It's the thing we would want to do for each other.

I also want to commend the member from Parkdale—High Park, who gave a very impassioned speech the other day, which I had the opportunity to listen to. I think it's very clear that most of us in this Legislature support this bill. At least that's what I've understood from the debate.

I look forward to the continuation of the debate, the continuation, I reckon, in Ontario of ensuring that we look after the safety and the proper care of animals we share this planet with.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to be able to say a few words about Bill 80. My colleagues have

spoken about what the bill is about: It's basically to protect the orca whale from being kept in captivity or from being bred.

I just want to say a little bit about the orca whale. Orca whales are highly social, almost like they have a family. They communicate with each other, which is very rare.

1010

Also, they do hunt. When they go hunting, they have highly sophisticated ways of hunting. Some of the whales will be up at one end and some will be at the back end, and they'll chase after their prey and try to catch it. So, again, as previous colleagues have said, imagine chaining a dog or an animal that is highly sophisticated on a four- or five-foot chain and limiting it to that.

The thing also about the orcas is that they have certain sounds they make with each other, for communication. We haven't yet discovered what exactly they're saying, but we know they are talking with each other.

The bill in front of us says you can't keep these animals in an aquarium area. It's just not right.

I'll give you an example. I tabled a private member's bill last session to do with elephants. Elephants are in the same category, probably a little bit smarter. I have three cats at home. My wife and I have three stray cats that we brought into the house. Once in a while, I pick up a cat and put it in front of the mirror. The cat doesn't really understand or make sense of the fact that the cat is being reflected off the mirror. Most animals can't do that. However, if you put a piece of masking tape forming an X on the cheek of an elephant and put a mirror in front of the elephant, the elephant will actually, with its trunk, try to remove the masking tape, because the elephant realizes, "There is something on my cheek," which other animals, as I was saying, don't do.

Elephants, again, are very sophisticated. Out in the wild, they go out in families, and if a family member dies, they hold a kind of funeral. They'll get together around the dead elephant and they will wail or bellow—I'm not sure what the exact word is—in sadness, almost like crying, because one of their colleagues, one of their friends or family members, has died.

So the orcas are in a similar category. We moved, here in Toronto, to take the elephants out of the Toronto Zoo and move them to a sanctuary in California, just north of San Francisco. They've joined other elephants there and they go out together as a family. When they're walking around the sanctuary, it's not that each one will go separately; they get together. They're highly social and they go out together and take walks and then decide, "Let's have some food; let's eat some branches here." They work together. One may find water and make a certain sound, and the other elephants will go over and have a drink of water.

It's the same with orcas—not the same examples, but the same sophisticated communication techniques. I think one day we'll be able to figure out exactly what the orcas are saying to each other, the way they talk to each other, what their sounds actually mean. They're probably talking to each other at a different vibration.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They're saying, "Vote NDP."

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They're saying, "Free Willy."

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My colleagues across the aisle here, members of the NDP, have made some comments, and I can't address them all. I've only got a minute and 13 seconds left. But there was a movie that came out, *Free Willy*, and I know what that was about. It was to free a whale out of a marine facility.

But I think this bill is something that is really, really important and that it comes at the right time. More and more trainers that work with these animals are realizing that these animals are highly intelligent, and, "What am I doing, as a trainer, enclosing this animal or putting food out so it can grab food from my hand and make a group of people in a marine facility be very happy?"

This bill—again, I like it. I think the opposition members like it. We're having a discussion on it. I look forward to hearing from the opposition members. I look forward to this going to committee. Maybe some amendments will be passed and then brought back to this Legislature for third reading. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have a couple of people to introduce this morning. First are Edward Numajiri from my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East and his aunt, Grace Smith—welcome; and Margaret Spoelstra, who is the executive director of Autism Ontario, who is here to mark World Autism Awareness Day.

I want to say welcome to all of you. Thanks for being here.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to welcome visitors from Asheville, North Carolina: Bill Smith, Ann Smith, Darden Smith, Ann Caton Smith and Elizabeth Smith. Welcome. I hope you enjoy today.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Ottawa West—Nepean and page captain Jade Proulx, I'm pleased to introduce her mother, Sarah Johnston-Proulx, who will be in the public gallery this morning. Welcome.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am very pleased to welcome today Alison Hearn and Vanessa Brown, who have joined us from the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association.

Mr. Han Dong: On behalf of my constituent and page Caleb Woolcott, I would like to welcome his friend Laurie. Laurie is in the public gallery somewhere—oh, there she is. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Legislature this morning Ms. Montarras's grade 10 civics class from Oakwood Collegiate

in my riding of Davenport. Welcome to Queen's Park, students.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm absolutely delighted to welcome today to Queen's Park, from my riding of Burlington, Dana Anderson; her son, Alex; and Andrea Kovacs, founder of PAATH, Parents of Adults with Autism Transitioning with Hope. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Henry "Bubba" Ludwa. He's a great friend of mine. He supported me my entire adult life. Unfortunately, Bubba passed away this week and he's being buried this morning at 10:30. I know he's here in spirit, and I just want him to rest in peace.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure for me to introduce my father, Mr. Antonio Berardinetti, who is here today. He's wearing the red sweater.

I fight with him sometimes; I say to him, "You're the reason I got into politics"—because I wanted to become a teacher, and he said, "No, you've got to become a lawyer, then a politician." I guess I have mixed feelings, but it's a pleasure to introduce him today: Mr. Antonio Berardinetti.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One of the conventions of this place is not to have a family fight on the floor.

Further introductions?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure today to introduce, from Ottawa, the mother of our page Jade Johnston, Sarah Johnston, here in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome Stephanie Pause to our Legislature today. Stephanie is visiting us from Copenhagen, Denmark. Stephanie, please wave if you're over there. I can't—yes, there you are. Hello.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce my good friend and a member of my riding association, Sukhpal Tutt, as well as his colleague Matt Kim.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to ask all members to welcome Chris Yaccato from the Ontario Lung Association.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome all of the members of the Autism Society here this morning. My statement this afternoon at 1 p.m. will be on Autism Awareness Day.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two students sponsored by the Rotary Club of Brighton, which is my Rotary club: Chloe Chazottes from Toulouse, France, and Kaisa Uoti from Eura, Finland—and of course, my wife, Diane, in the east gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce Rachel Matthews. She is the mother of Sarah John, the page from my riding of Mississauga—Erindale, and I want to welcome her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This morning in the Speaker's gallery, we do have guests of the page captain, Thomas Dubois: his mom, Suzanne, his dad, Greg, and his older sister, who was another page—

Thomas says he's doing a better job—Rosalin Dubois. Welcome.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the Minister of Children and Youth Services and responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I believe we have unanimous consent to wear ribbons to recognize Autism Awareness Day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services and responsible for women's issues is asking for unanimous consent to wear ribbons to recognize Autism Awareness Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I believe one of our colleagues is having a birthday. My seatmate from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is having a birthday. I think all of us want to wish him a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On that joyous occasion, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. In 1998, as Minister of Energy, I undertook the restructuring of hydro in Ontario, and we created an organization—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I've said before that I want the question put and the answer given in quiet.

Please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: At that time, we created an organization called the Ontario Electricity Financing Corp. The purpose of the OEFC was simple: It was responsible for paying off all electricity debt in the province.

As of March 31, 2013—that's the last year that numbers are available—that electricity debt was \$27 billion. That's about \$5,400 per ratepayer.

The law requires that all money coming from a sale of any share in Hydro One, including Brampton, must be used to pay down that electricity debt. Premier, if money from your sale of Hydro One goes to infrastructure, as you claim, where will you find the \$27 billion to pay off hydro's debt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment on the details of that question.

I want to just first say that I want to make it clear to the member opposite and to the people of Ontario that the

reason we are looking at the assets in this province, the reason we asked Ed Clark and his group to review the assets in the province of Ontario, was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm asking for the same thing in an answer as I did for the question.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —was so that we would have the ability to leverage those assets, to invest in the assets that are needed for the 21st century.

We need badly to build highways, to build roads and bridges and public transit. Quite frankly, there's a deficit of infrastructure across the country, but in Ontario, we are doing the right thing: We are investing in that infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we saw this coming. In 1998, we feared that, one day, a Liberal government would come along and look to sell off assets with no regard to paying down the debt. That's why, when the PC government passed the Electricity Act, we legislated that every dollar from the sale of Hydro One had to go to the OEFC to pay down the province's electricity debt.

That law still stands, Premier, and it prevents you from putting that money toward anything but the \$27-billion debt.

Premier, are you going to obey the law, or will you simply ignore it?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I know that the minister is going to want to speak to the specifics, but I just think it is very important that people understand that this is a member of a party that sold the 407, that took absolutely no care to make sure that there would be an ongoing revenue stream, that there would be ownership on the part of the province or that the money realized from that sale would be used for a specific—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to ask the member from Simcoe North to come to order. I'm also going to indicate to the government side that when she's answering, there should be no comments, and I'm going to insist on it.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There was absolutely no thought, Mr. Speaker, to the investment of the money that was realized from that sale into the future benefit or future assets of the people of the province. All of those things are things that we are taking into account. We are not going to follow the path that the previous government laid out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Premier gets it. Premier, if you use the proceeds from the sale of any part of Hydro One for infrastructure, for example, that \$27-billion electricity debt will remain there for ratepayers or taxpayers to pay for many decades to come.

Premier, is the cost of new infrastructure in Ontario going to become another expensive line item on our hydro bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite brings forward and highlights some issues that are of concern to us because that's the legacy they left when they tried working with this asset. We want to make certain that we do not do a repeat of the damage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —that they created for generations to come—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect he didn't hear me. The member from Renfrew will come to order. The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary will come to order.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are not going to speculate on matters that are still being discussed. We have asked the advisory council reporting to the Premier as to the valuations on maximizing the returns to the people of Ontario. It's critical, as part of those principles, that we provide incremental value to the people of Ontario, that we protect the public interest and that it be open and transparent and independently validated. That's exactly what we're doing. Anything that's created will be there to ensure that we protect the people of Ontario and the ratepayers.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, let me help by laying out how the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. works under the law. Currently, the OEFC has about \$11.2 billion in stranded debt on top of the \$17 billion it is guaranteed from a Hydro One sale. The OEFC currently pays down that \$11.2-billion debt through the profits made at Hydro One and OPG. But Minister, if you sell any portion of Hydro One, that revenue stream that is used to pay down the debt will shrink.

How will the OEFC pay down the electricity debt if you take away its primary source of income?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members will come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's a great question coming from a member, the critic, who actually was part of the government that created the residual debt, and now there's a retirement charge that the people of Ontario and ratepayers have to repay. As a result, we have taken the precautions and the necessary steps to bring it down.

The member opposite should also know, and he knows fully well, that it's a function of the revenues coming through that stream, and when those change, it changes

the amount of the residual debt. We're taking every precaution and every care necessary to get it reduced. We're helping the people of Ontario because of the damages that they created in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, Speaker, I've never actually sat in government, but I am looking forward to the day.

Again to the Minister of Energy: Minister, we know how you're going to pay down the debt at OEFC if you sell Hydro One: You're going to introduce new charges on the bills of electricity ratepayers. It's the only way you people know how to do business.

Hydro prices are already unaffordable. Just last week, you admitted that they're going to go up by about \$140 per year per customer. I can only imagine what the increase will be when you realize you have to pay down the OEFC debt with less revenue coming from less ownership in Hydro One.

Minister, what new charges will the electricity ratepayers of Ontario see on their bills in order to pay down the debt that you are ignoring?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, Mr. Speaker, a couple of things. The OEB is going to be a regulator; it is now and it will continue to be as we proceed forward in any initiatives in regard to pricing. Of course, the minister, and I'll let him take the next supplementary, has done an excellent job of finding ways to mitigate and protect the people of Ontario and ratepayers as we proceed forward.

The member opposite is also part of a party whose potential leader is talking about looking at this very issue. They're working on the premise that they want to be able to look at the valuations and the assets that we have before us to see how we can improve upon them. The member opposite and his team are the ones that have also initiated some of these ideas as they follow our lead.

We will lead. We will continue to do what's right to protect the interests of the public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: After 12 years of this mess, they've even confused themselves, Speaker. So let's recap.

Again to the Minister of Energy: The OEFC needs revenue to pay down the \$11.2 billion of debt that it currently holds, but by selling off Hydro One, you're going to have to share that revenue with the new buyer. That means less money for the OEFC to pay down that debt. The only way your Liberal government will make up that lost revenue is by hosing electricity ratepayers yet again.

Minister, when are you going to tell the ratepayers that electricity bills are going to continue to skyrocket when you try to pay down the \$11-billion debt that you're responsible for?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member is beginning with a false premise. He's beginning with a supposition or a speculation as to what we might be bringing forward.

But let's talk about the general principle. I have a quote here that I'd like to read. This quote says—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The quote I have says, “As Premier, I will order an immediate review of all assets owned by government. Assets that don't serve the core functions of government will be divested. And every dollar made will be invested in new infrastructure right across the province.”

And “Let's use the full value of these assets to build the roads, highways, subways and infrastructure that every Ontarian can use.”

That is from Christine Elliott, member from Whitby–Oshawa, in her campaign. If that's part of her campaign, she should walk over here and join us.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. Your own caucus members were heckling.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The energy minister went on live TV to say, “The government has decided that we will be selling a portion of Hydro One.” But in spite of an accidental moment of truth from the energy minister, there are fundamental issues that the Liberals have not addressed.

We've seen that the Premier can't control private power companies; as an example, Eastern Power. You remember Eastern Power, right? They were involved in the Mississauga gas plant scandal. This company has apparently been building pipelines without permission and forcing workers into unsafe work conditions. It seems the gas plant scandal continues.

But we also know that private power costs us more money. So can the Premier promise Ontarians that hydro bills won't go up after the government privatizes Hydro One and local utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, as the Minister of Finance has said and as the Minister of Energy has said, one of the principles we're using in the conversation that we're having with Mr. Clark and the conversation that he's having about the assets is that the controlling of price is very important to us; it's extremely important to the people of Ontario. The regulatory regime is extremely important. So the protections of the people of Ontario are at the core of what we know we need to do.

But at the same time, I say to the leader of the third party, she ran on a platform that was exactly the same as ours in terms of looking at assets and building the real-

ization and the leveraging of those assets—the money that could be realized from that—into the plan to build transit and transit infrastructure. The reality is that we are moving forward. We are implementing the plan that we ran on, that she ran on, so that we can invest in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's really clear is that New Democrats are the only party in this House that fundamentally disagrees with the selling-off of our public assets, including our hydro assets.

The Premier will not make the promise that selling off Hydro One and local hydro companies won't cost Ontarians more, because she knows full well that power bills are going up. It's going to hurt families. It's going to hurt manufacturing. It's going to hurt our resource sector. It's going to hurt innovators. This morning we heard from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture that it's going to hurt agriculture. It's going to hurt everybody, except for a very small handful of private energy interests. Will the Premier finally pull the plug on this ridiculous plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What is very clear is that the leader of the third party is a member of one of two parties in this Legislature who don't believe that investing in infrastructure for the future is necessary to economic growth in this province. There is no plan that has come forward from either party, particularly not from the NDP, on how to invest in infrastructure: how to build the transit, the roads and the bridges that are needed across this province.

That, Mr. Speaker, is irresponsible. It speaks to a lack of understanding of how the economy in Ontario works, it speaks to a lack of understanding of the needs for the 21st century and it speaks to a lack of understanding of Ontario's position in the world. Well, we understand that. We're going to invest in infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier doesn't understand is that this asset is owned by the people of Ontario, and should be owned by them and their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren from here on in.

It used to be that the only way to pay for transit in this province was by tolling the roads. When the Liberals found that that was not going to fly with the public, all of a sudden they're going to have an asset sale and sell off everything that Ontarians own.

You know what? It's not just New Democrats who see the privatization plan of the Premier for the nonsense that it actually is. It's not just the thousands of people who are taking to social media and sending letters telling the Liberals that their plan is wrong. The Toronto Star editorial says, “Privatizing the electricity grid was a bad idea when Mike Harris' Conservatives came up with it in 2001. It still is.”

The Globe and Mail says, “The mandate Ontario's Liberal government handed former TD Bank chief Ed

Clark was flawed from the outset. Selling off prized electricity assets to pay for transit projects smacked more of a cash grab than a considered approach....” It’s—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are going to be extremely, extremely thoughtful and careful in all of the work that we do around leveraging assets, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay will come to order. Thank you. Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is extremely important to the future economy, and to the present economy, of this province that we demonstrate the will to make the investments that are necessary. We cannot talk to people in other countries—we can’t talk to people in China or South America about investing in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, unless we have demonstrated the will to make the investments that are necessary.

The fact is that we have to leverage our assets, and we have to work with the private sector. Because that’s really at the root of what the leader of the third party is talking about: She doesn’t want to work with the private sector, except that when her party was in office, they signed nine private power generation contracts, so apparently—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT’S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. A cut is a cut, no matter what the Premier calls it. Yesterday, the Premier called a half-a-billion-dollar education cut an “adjustment.” People are being fired, but the Premier says boards have staffed differently. Firing is firing, no matter what the Premier calls it.

Will the Premier admit that she’s cutting education and tell Ontarians how many more schools are going to be closed and how many more education workers are going to be fired in her 2015 budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let’s just begin with the fact that we’ve built 725 schools in this province since this government has been in office, and that there are more than 700 renovations. So on balance, there has been much more building, renovation and enhancement of school buildings, if that’s what we’re talking about, than there has been otherwise.

At the same time, if the leader of the third party understood how staffing models work across boards and in classrooms—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, seriously. If the leader of the third party understood that boards make decisions, and in fact, schools make decisions about how they’re going to allocate staff—as enrollment declines, there are decisions that boards have to make across the province. But even in the face of declining enrollment,

education funding in this province is stable in the face of fewer students in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think what we need to do is renovate this chamber so that it’s big enough for the Premier’s ego.

Yesterday the Premier said that if a board chooses to change their staffing because their funding is changing, that’s their prerogative. I think Ontarians might appreciate a translation from Liberalese into plain old English. What the Premier was really saying was that the Liberals are cutting school board funding, and education workers, therefore, are being fired.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order on all sides, please.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals are cutting school board funding, and education workers are getting fired. Gee, that’s so hard to understand.

The Premier is trying to duck responsibility by blaming the boards. The Premier said she got into politics because of cuts to education. Most people thought she was talking about fighting those cuts, not implementing them.

Will she stop her cuts to education?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In my previous answer, I was talking about staffing. The fact is that 30 years ago, I was cutting my teeth on staffing committees; I was on staffing committees as a parent. I was working with the school board to try to understand how staffing worked—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’ll get my work-out, but I’m going to ask for quiet, please. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was at that point that I learned how education was working. The member for Kitchener—Waterloo was talking about those years. Those were difficult years because we were working up to having to fight the cuts that Mike Harris was making, and they were the amalgamations. Those were very, very difficult years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those years are gone. There are billions and billions more dollars in education. That funding is stable, despite the fact that there are fewer students in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s not just schools that the Premier is cutting; the Liberals are also cutting health care. Just this week, we learned there are new nursing cuts in London and Kitchener. Earlier today, we were joined by the Ontario Health Coalition, together with international health experts who are standing up for health care in Niagara.

Will the Premier do the right thing—if not in education, then perhaps in health care—and ensure that the people of the Niagara region have access to health care when and where they need it and keep the Niagara region hospitals open instead of closing them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to speak to the theme of these questions. The theme is that we can't change anything, that nothing should change. There should be no transit built. There should be no roads and bridges built because we can't raise the money to do that. There should be no change at the local school board level, no consolidation of schools, no community hubs created and no renovation of new schools so that new programs can be given to kids. There should be no transformation of the health care system. There should be no more home care in our communities because that would require change, and that would require a different kind of staffing.

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So the theme of the NDP is, "Everything's fine. We can't change a thing because we cannot look ahead. We cannot use our imagination. We cannot work with the private sector or school boards or hospitals to make the changes that are necessary."

That's not who we are, Mr. Speaker. That's who they are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Just when you hoped the smell from your gas plant scandal was dissipating, today the odour is as strong as ever. The company you gave a sweetheart deal to as part of your Liberal seat-saver program is at it again. Eastern Power and its subsidiary Greenfield South have now apparently built a pipeline, without a permit, to service your wrongly relocated Mississauga gas plant. This is the same company you gave a \$36-million payout to for sunk costs and a \$45-million no-interest loan. According to the Auditor General, the total cost of the cancellation is \$275 million.

Premier, you can't cut a tree down in Ontario without a permit. How did you allow your buddies to build a pipeline without one?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've made this point before:

When I stand up and I get quiet, it stays that way, and you don't use it for a chance to get another one in.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the sky is falling down over this dispute and this contract. The reality is, what is going on here is a dispute over where a link will be, where a pipe will go, to provide the gas to this particular facility. It's an issue that is under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Energy Board. The dispute

has been brought before the Ontario Energy Board. I understand that the Ontario Energy Board is going to decide sometime today or tomorrow, to say, "The pipe is going here," or "It's going there." That's the issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: She contracted for a power plant where it wasn't wanted and where it should never have been put in the first place. Then she cancelled it to save Liberal seats in the 2011 election, as the campaign co-chair. Later, when her friends at Eastern Power and Greenfield wouldn't stop construction for another two months after the election, she bent over backwards, opening the public purse to pay for a purely political promise.

Now we find that this Liberal government has turned a blind eye to what Eastern Power is doing at the newly relocated site in Lambton. They are doing whatever they want.

Given the gas plant scandal and, more recently, the Sudbury by-election scandal, should Ontarians really be surprised that this Premier is willing to ignore the law if it suits her own public participation interest?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, let's start with the fact that that particular plant is being built with a willing host community. That's number one.

Number two, this dispute has to do with where a connecting link—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order, and the member from Nipissing, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —to bring gas to the site.

That is a dispute that is being resolved between the parties and that has been brought before the Ontario Energy Board. They'll be issuing a decision as to where that particular pipe will go, and the issue will be resolved.

They're making a mountain out of a molehill. They're trying to go back to the days when they could stand up here every day and talk about the gas plant scandal.

The reality is, we built 20 new gas plants in this province. They're working and functioning. There are two new ones going under construction. This one has a dispute about a connection for a gas line.

Mr. Speaker, they should get—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order. I do remind her to use the titles or ridings, and I will be forceful on that.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. We know that you're about to have an interview with the Ontario Provincial Police in regard to the bribery scandal. We know that it's reported that the Ontario Provincial Police do want to interview Mrs. Sorbara, Mr. Loughheed and the MPP from Sudbury, Mr. Thibeault. Can you con-

firm if those meetings are to take place and the interviews will go forward?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've been clear that I will be having an interview before the end of the month. The investigation is taking place outside of this House. It's not taking place in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and I'll work with the authorities outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I asked a very simple question. There are three people who are also under investigation: Madam Sorbara, Mr. Loughheed and Mr. Thibeault. The question is, are the Ontario Provincial Police setting up meetings, and have your members agreed to have those meetings with the OPP, to be interviewed in regard to the Sudbury bribery scandal: yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I can only speak for my schedule. Some days I can barely speak for my schedule. I know that I am going to be meeting with the OPP before the end of the month. I will work with the authorities outside of this Legislature. But that is the point: The investigation is taking place outside of the Legislature with the authorities, and I will work with them in that process.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We know that farmers feed cities and are an integral part of our \$34-billion agri-food industry. But if it's going to grow and continue to compete internationally, more needs to be done.

In October 2013, the Premier challenged our agri-food industry to double its growth rate to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. In order to help meet this challenge, we need to work with that industry to identify opportunities for growth and innovation.

Just last weekend in Waterloo region, for instance, the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival attracted a crowd of thousands. They ate 10,000 pancakes smothered with over 680 litres of maple syrup made by local producers. One of them is a good friend of mine, Dennis Weber, who's a third-generation maple syrup producer near St. Jacob's.

I'd like to ask the minister to update this House on the status of the Premier's growth plan.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the great member from Kitchener Centre for asking this question. She had a very distinguished career with CTV News before she arrived here, so she has a great perspective of what's going on right in the province of Ontario.

Maple syrup is one of our province's oldest traditional agricultural products. We have more than 2,500 producers right across the province of Ontario, and we all know that Lanark county, in eastern Ontario, is the maple syrup capital of Ontario. Together, we harvest about 1.5 million litres of syrup, making Ontario one of the top three producers in Canada, grossing more than \$32 million in maple product sales and contributing over \$53 million to Canada's GDP.

Mr. Speaker, our government—your government—is here to work with our agri-food industry partners, like maple syrup producers, to help them meet the Premier's growth challenge. We will measure progress as we move along the way, with our new growth steering committee that we recently announced—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand, you sit. Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. We'll hear some more from you in just a moment. It's encouraging to hear that our government is committed to working with our maple syrup producers.

Minister, in December 2014, the federal government announced changes to the federal maple products regulations under the Canada Agricultural Products Act. This is for common standards for grading, colour classifications and labelling for maple products across all maple-producing jurisdictions. The approved regulation came into effect in December of last year, with a two-year implementation period to allow time for the industry to meet the new requirements.

Spokespeople with the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association are telling us that regulatory harmonization would provide a number of benefits to their industry. Can the minister please inform this House on a timeline when Ontario producers can expect to see changes?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the supplementary.

We are very aware of the new standards that have been brought in by the government of Canada. We'll be starting a consultation with small, medium and large maple syrup producers throughout Ontario. Consultations will help to identify and address requests made by maple syrup producers, including the grading and classification of maple products.

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We want to ensure, as the Premier says, that we have a very robust conversation, encouraging growth and exploring how the sector can contribute to the Premier's Agri-Food Growth Challenge. Our government—your government—is committed to working with our maple syrup producers to meet their needs and support them in their efforts to grow their businesses and contribute positively to Ontario's economy.

I do know that those pancakes in Elmira came from Peterborough, from Quaker Oats.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: Yesterday, you released the SAMS—such a mess system—interim report. Sadly, it was 20 pages of nothing. In fact, the scope of the report explicitly says it does not provide an assessment of the overall system or infrastructure performance of SAMS. Minister, vulnerable citizens who depend on social assistance want answers. Front-line workers want answers. Yet this report

is obviously just an attempt by your government to deflect people from the real problem, and a waste of \$200,000.

Minister, can you explain why these key areas were omitted from the report, and how the people of Ontario can trust you to manage this file going forward?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, we have acknowledged the problems with SAMS, and we know that there is a lot more work to do. This is why we commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to help us going forward in terms of improving the system.

In terms of the functionality of the system, of course, the report really is, how are we helping vulnerable Ontarians? We have now had five successful pay runs for both ODSF and OW, payment to 570,000 families, over three million payments to our most vulnerable Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Community and Social Services: Minister, yesterday in scrums, when asked why you implemented a system that clearly wasn't ready, you responded by saying, "Hindsight is 20/20." When you say it will be a seamless rollout, despite warnings from front-line workers and the opposition, you had better be certain.

I'm going to challenge your five seamless runs. Yesterday was cheque day, and hundreds of thousands of people did not get their cheques. You are playing with people's lives. Our vulnerable recipients deserve better, and so do our front-line staff.

Minister, people have lost confidence. Will you do the honourable thing, accept responsibility for the continuing SAMS boondoggle and resign today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: There is some incorrect information related to yesterday's cheque run. I've been assured that it was a success.

I have visited a number of front-line offices—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I have visited Hamilton ODSF, Brantford OW, Toronto OW, North Bay DSAB and the ODSF office there, Peterborough OW and ODSF, and Ottawa OW. I was able to thank some of the social assistance workers in Mississauga for their great efforts. I have listened to front-line workers. I want to thank them for their dedication. I want to thank them for their frankness in speaking directly to me with their concerns.

This is precisely what PricewaterhouseCoopers is addressing in the final report. We look forward to their recommendations.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. No one is above accountability in this Legislature, but the Minister of Community and Social Services—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. Carry on.

Miss Monique Taylor: —the Minister of Community and Social Services refuses to take responsibility for the SAMS fiasco.

Since November, families have been underpaid. Cheques have been too late to pay the rent. Staff are overwhelmed and exhausted. Just yesterday, SAMS had to be rebooted, forcing staff to reassess many of their cases.

SAMS is a nightmare, but the Liberals still think they aren't accountable to the people of Ontario. What will it take for the Premier to ask for the minister's resignation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community and Social Services will want to speak to the supplementary, but I believe I just heard her take responsibility. I believe I just heard her say that we recognize that there have been problems with the implementation of SAMS. Absolutely, we understand that there have been problems.

Furthermore, we understand that there has been stress on front-line workers. That's why the minister has been visiting offices. That's why she has been listening to what they have to say. That's why there is a report being written.

The fact is, there needed to be a change. There needed to be a new system put in place so the service could be better.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order—second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There have been problems with the implementation of that system. The fact is, we are addressing those problems so that the front-line workers will have the support that they need and so that the service to recipients will be improved.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings, come to order—second time. Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: The minister told us last Thursday, "We have been extremely successful." But here's how the Liberals measure success: 21 weeks of chaos, 500,000 T5s shredded, privacy of 720 clients breached, \$240 million and counting wasted on software that doesn't work, and now \$200,000 spent on a report that ignores the biggest issues that staff and recipients have been telling the Liberals about for months: The functionality of the system doesn't work.

How much needs to go wrong before the Premier asks this minister to resign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: My responsibility certainly lies, looking forward, to ensuring that SAMS does come to full implementation. I'm taking that extremely seriously. This is why we wanted a fresh set of eyes with PricewaterhouseCoopers to give us some good advice going forward. In fact, they have acknowledged some of the

successes to date. Some 57 priority issues have been addressed. We have opened help lines to assist those staff who are clearly quite stressed, we have developed new and updated job aids, and we are releasing updates regularly to staff to improve communication.

I am given the mandate by our Premier to continue to work as hard as I can to ensure that all our officials are also doing that, to ensure that vulnerable Ontarians are looked after appropriately.

PAN AM GAMES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Yesterday at the Legislature, I was able to see the medals for the Pan/Parapan Am Games up close and personal. Let me tell you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The question is to?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm sorry. The question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

As I was saying, those medals are simply amazing. I was able to see how they were made and learn the story behind them.

The artwork of the medals was designed in collaboration with Christi Belcourt, a Métis visual artist. This is the first time that Braille has been incorporated into the medals for the Pan/Parapan Am Games. Seeing the medals here in the Legislature allowed everything to really sink in: The Pan/Parapan Am Games are coming. Yesterday marked 100 days until the games, and I'm so excited to be welcoming so many people to our province.

Can the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games update us on where we are, 99 days out from the games?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member from Davenport for her advocacy and for working within her community to really push these games. Thank you so much. I know you're a big supporter, and you've been doing a great job in engaging your community.

We're 99 days away from the games, and the excitement is building. Over 60,000 people have signed up to volunteer. We've sold over 350,000 tickets. Fifteen of the capital venues, including 11 of the athletic facilities, have been completed and are open for community use.

Yesterday, we marked the 100th day until the games by welcoming 100 new Canadians with a citizenship ceremony held at our spectacular athletes' village. This was a great example of how these games embody so much more than just the Pan/Parapan Am Games; they represent the diversity that we value here in the province of Ontario. I'm so proud to support these games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Excitement for the games is building up in my riding of Davenport and across the province. The celebrations have already begun.

Last week, I attended the IGNITE event held in the Legislature. Through the IGNITE program, Ontario is supporting celebrations across the province to connect residents and visitors with the spirit and cultural diversity of the Pan/Parapan Am Games. At the event last week, there was food from Latin America and the Caribbean,

steel band performers, and people painting murals, among other performances. The event gave only a sneak peek of what we can expect as the games begin and into the excitement that will take over our province over the next 99 days.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell us more about how our government is supporting communities in celebrations of the Pan/Parapan Am Games?

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Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, thank you to the member.

When we won the bid for these games, we felt it was important to have these games in 16 municipalities across the Golden Horseshoe. The torch will stop at 130 communities, starting in beautiful Thunder Bay.

We want people from across this province to share in this excitement and, of course, to support a wide range of events and organizations helping to promote and celebrate the spirit of these games. That's why I'm proud that our government has funded 103 IGNITE celebrations in communities across the great province of Ontario to engage communities.

So 2015 is a time for celebrating our Pan-American connection and the spirit of sport. In 99 days, we will host the largest multi-sport event in the history of this nation, and I am so proud to be a part of these games, Speaker.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, to the Premier: Premier, just before you became Liberal leader in 2012, you stated, "When I say we need to stay on our government's fiscal plan of balancing the budget by 2017-18, I mean it." So you want us to believe in a balanced budget in two years despite the fact that your deficits have been increasing over the past three years, not decreasing. Your hand-picked economist, Don Drummond, predicts a \$30.2-billion deficit in two years; you say zero.

Who are we to believe: you or your repeatedly misleading numbers from Don Drummond?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's an interesting question, given the fact that we released a report back in November talking about some of the challenges before us over the next 20 years. We commissioned the report from Mr. Drummond, who provided a number of recommendations, of which we are now applying well over 80%. He himself has acknowledged that we far exceeded even his expectations.

But to answer your question more directly, you should believe the numbers that are being reported. The numbers that are being reported show that \$1.6 billion has been saved by this government over this year. We're on track

to balance by 2017-18, and I'm very proud of the work that all Ontarians are doing to step it up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly don't believe either one of you. Year after year, you present to this House phony deficit numbers, fake numbers, purposely designed to confuse the people of Ontario into thinking—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Beaches–East York will withdraw.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You confuse the people of Ontario into thinking that your increasing deficits aren't that significant. Your inflated deficit projections are a deliberate scam to obfuscate the real deficit numbers that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish.

Mr. Toby Barrett: A bit of a trick, to obfuscate. Premier, you have done this three years—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I will ask the Minister of Finance to answer.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, and really to all members of this House, we try to do our best with integrity, and we are being very forthright in what we do.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: No, seriously. We respect—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

To me, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We certainly respect questions that come before us, and I believe people's intentions, regardless of political stripe, are good. But frankly, to suggest that we are trying to do something other than to try to bring forward something that is real to the people of Ontario, as we've done—the Conference Board of Canada has already cited that Ontario far exceeds every other government in Canada for its integrity.

We do believe that Ontarians want what we're about to put forward, and that's improved numbers on track to balance by 2017-18, and we'll work together.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, I have asked the Premier three times this week if she will prohibit university boards of governors from negotiating million-dollar salaries for university presidents. Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board said that Bill 8 would address this issue.

The problem is Bill 8 does nothing to prevent double salary payouts from being negotiated in the future. Ontarians could be seeing more double salary deals for

university presidents, paid for by public dollars, rising student tuition fees and cuts to university budgets.

Premier, university presidents are already among the highest-paid public sector employees in Ontario. How can your government defend a system that allows university presidents to earn twice their salary if they don't go on leave?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, none of us on this side of the House is defending that. In fact, I'm very pleased to know that a portion of the president's salary will be returned.

We know that there's a problem with executive compensation. That's why we brought in Bill 8. That's why we brought in the accountability act.

Just to correct what the member said: In fact, the accountability act does enable the government to prohibit pay in lieu of leave when looking at compensation frameworks. I asked that question explicitly, Mr. Speaker. As we look at the whole compensation, the executive compensation, it is possible within the scope of Bill 8 to look at exactly this kind of thing.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're not defending it. We're not defending it. We are looking at the whole compensation package, including this kind of mechanism.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Premier: In September 2012, the Liberal government told Ontarians that “executive pay would be permanently capped at no more than double the Premier's salary—\$418,000 per year.”

We now know that last year, 181 individuals made more than twice the Premier's salary, an increase of 24% from the year before. So the problem of skyrocketing public sector CEO salaries in Ontario is clearly getting worse; it's not getting better.

Yesterday, the Deputy Premier assured this House that Bill 8 sets limits on public sector CEO compensation. Of course, anyone who reads the bill knows that it does not cap compensation. However, on Monday, the Liberal member for Kitchener Centre told CBC KW something completely different. When asked about the out-of-control public sector CEO salaries, she said that “we're going to see hard cap, so look for that in the upcoming budget.” Which is it, Premier?

In the face of cuts to hospitals and schools, and soaring public CEO pay, it's an insult to hard-working families.

Speaker, can the Premier tell Ontarians whether her government will follow through on its promise to cap public sector CEO salaries, or just keep telling Ontarians one thing and doing another?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been very clear that there will be caps. That's what Bill 8 was about; the accountability act is there. What's remarkable is that this party, the NDP, didn't vote for that act.

The member opposite knows full well that there will be caps, she knows that there will be a range. She also knows that her leader also said that there need to be exemptions. She said—this is November 27, 2013—the NDP leader said, “When we're talking about people—the

top nuclear engineers in the world, for example—we've made an exemption for that type of case in the bill. We would have to look at those folks on a case-by-case basis. That's why the exemption exists."

The NDP understands that we need caps. We've got caps in the bill. The NDP understands that there has to be a range of salaries. That's in the bill. The NDP understands that there have to be exemptions. That's in the bill. And they didn't vote for it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order.

Start the clock, please.

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT TRAITEMENT DE L'AUTISME

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, I think it is safe to say that all of us in this House can agree that giving our children and youth the best start possible in life is a top priority. I know this is a top priority for you and for your ministry.

This is especially true for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder, as well as for the families and loved ones who take care of them.

Minister, as today is World Autism Awareness Day, pourriez-vous, s'il vous plaît, nous informer sur le travail entrepris par le ministère des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse concernant l'autisme? Merci.

1130

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the member for this very important question on this very important day.

Children living with autism, as well as the family members who help and support them, are indeed some of the most inspiring people I have met since becoming the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

C'est pour cela que je suis heureuse du progrès de notre gouvernement durant les 12 dernières années pour les jeunes personnes avec autisme.

We've expanded applied behaviour analysis-based services and supports, which are helping 8,000 children each year become more independent and improve their communication and social skills. Through our Autism Intervention Program, we've increased intensive behaviour intervention services to children and youth with autism across the province. Most importantly, we've more than quadrupled the investments in autism services for children and youth.

I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to speak to this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very encouraged by the strong action being taken by this government to help improve the lives of children and youth with autism.

Je suis très heureuse d'apprendre que des investissements substantiels sont faits dans ce domaine.

But, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Ottawa—Orléans, I hear from families in my riding about autism services frequently. This issue is very close to my heart and close to home.

Having a place to go to get answers to these questions would be a valuable resource for any parent trying to find opportunities for their son or daughter and the services in their area. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I ask through you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services: Can you please tell this House about the places parents can go to find current information on autism and the services that may be available?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Notre gouvernement continue de fournir du financement pour aider les familles, incluant durant la semaine de relâche et pour les programmes de camps d'été. Ces merveilleux programmes aident à réduire le stress familial, à donner aux jeunes avec autisme une chance de se faire des amis, de développer des talents et de participer à de belles activités comme la natation, les arts et la musique.

My ministry has also created the Autism Parent Resource Kit. It includes tracking links to available services and the latest research, information on supports, treatments, transitions, coping strategies and so much more.

I'd like to acknowledge a very special guest with us in the House today, six-year-old Aiden Lee, an inspiring young man and the artist behind the autism resource kit. Thank you, Aiden, for your beautiful artwork.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, in 2010, Mr. Jim McEwen, a Durham region resident, suffered a stroke at the age of 55. Like many post-stroke patients, Mr. McEwen has required hundreds of physiotherapy treatments to regain mobility and improve his quality of life.

However, when Mr. McEwen needed our health care system the most, he was afforded only a dozen treatments and then was forgotten about. In fact, the OHIP model for physiotherapy greatly limits the coverage of those between the ages of 20 and 64. As a result, post-stroke patients in this age range struggle for access to the rehabilitation services they need and deserve.

Minister, my question is simple. Will you take steps to ensure that all post-stroke patients, regardless of age, have access to sufficient rehabilitation services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the very thoughtful question from the member opposite. I've received her letter on this issue. I know there's a private member's bill this afternoon that's going to be debated on the same issue as well. It's an issue that I know is important to many, many Ontarians.

The member opposite, I believe, does know that the ministry, for several years now, has—as part of our transformation away from program- and service-focused funding to funding which is focused on quality evidenced

in outcomes—began that important work on stroke services. We've made some important changes and now we're moving on our intention—and we have been for some time, through the ministry—on precisely the issue that the member opposite has raised, and that's to ensure that our approach to rehabilitation of post-stroke patients is focused on the same quality and positive-outcomes evidence that we would hope will lead to the best possible outcome for patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: Minister, as you will know, this is not a question about the changes that were made in physiotherapy several years ago, with which we strongly disagree; it is more a question of age discrimination. The fact of the matter is that people who suffer from strokes do not get the services they need if they're between the ages of 20 and 64.

There is a large body of evidence indicating that with consistent rehabilitation, post-stroke patients can show dramatic improvements to their health well past the six-month mark. However, the Ontario Stroke Network says that the rehabilitation needs of only about 50% of post-stroke patients are now being met. We need to recognize that there is a great need for comprehensive and integrated post-stroke management that reflects the long-term nature of stroke recovery.

Minister, as you've indicated, you're aware that this afternoon I'm bringing forward a private member's motion asking your government to find the necessary in-house savings for all post-stroke patients. Will you commit to supporting my motion this afternoon?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly don't want to imply that this isn't an important issue, but I do want to reiterate the fact that this is an issue that my ministry is, and has been for some time, working on—the elements that are expressed in her letter and in her private member's bill. She knows—I believe she does—that our government is not only committed to providing the best possible care for stroke patients but is moving on that important issue of ensuring that it's also provided on the rehabilitative side of things.

In fact, just last week, I made an important announcement, both on the physio side as well as on what's known as assess-and-restore, at Toronto Rehab, which focuses specifically on the issue that she's raising: how to make sure that we get these individuals back to full independence.

We have made important changes with regard to stroke services. My ministry for some time has been working on the precise issue that she has raised.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as you may know, the town of Fort Erie passed a resolution to once again give \$500,000 of the town's money to the racetrack in order to keep the track open and in operation.

Premier, this money is being given by the town to cover the loss of the gaming funds that resulted when your government ripped out the slot machines in Fort

Erie and never put them back. This is important, Premier. I'd like you to listen to this line: The track itself has a plan to become self-sustainable and not require any money from the province or from the taxpayers of Fort Erie.

The town fully supports keeping the track open. Will this government return the slots to Fort Erie Race Track so that the track can thrive and the burden is not on the taxpayers of Fort Erie?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do appreciate the question from my good friend the member from Niagara Falls. In fact, it seems just a short time ago that I extended an invitation to my good friend the member from Niagara Falls when I had the opportunity to be in Fort Erie with the leaders of the thoroughbred horse racing industry in order to announce that, indeed, this government has allocated more racing days for the great track in Fort Erie, which is something that's very important.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened carefully. We had a panel made up of three of the most distinguished individuals who have served in this Legislature: My good friend the honourable Elmer Buchanan, who sat with that party, a very distinguished member; the honourable John Snobelen, who sat on those benches over there; and, of course, our friend the honourable John Wilkinson. That panel put forward a framework for horse racing in Ontario. We're galloping forward when it comes to horse racing in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

The member from Huron-Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just want to share with the House that the page from Huron-Bruce, Rahul Pandya, won the right to compete in the provincial Legion public speaking contest on April 25, and I wish him the best of luck.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have people from the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre in Scarborough—Geetha Moorthy and three others—are here joining us today to celebrate Autism Awareness Day.

DEFERRED VOTES

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free

Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 45.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On December 3, 2014, Ms. Damerla moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Mr. Leal has moved that the question now be put. All those in favour of Mr. Leal's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadi, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Coleau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 41.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Damerla has moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no further votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We will note that we have the distinct pleasure of having Rev. Brent Hawkes with us here today. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: This afternoon in the House we have Aiden Lee, who designed the Autism Parent Resource Kit, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lee. Thank you so much for being here today. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TED PAISLEY

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to inform this House of a very special recognition that was made recently in my hometown of Petrolia, Ontario. On March 31, 2015, Petrolia resident Mr. Ted Paisley was awarded the French republic's Legion of Honour medal at a special ceremony, which I had the good fortune to attend, at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 216 in Petrolia.

The Legion of Honour is the highest decoration and order of merit bestowed by the French government and was awarded to Mr. Paisley in recognition of his significant contribution to the liberation of France in 1944. During World War II, Lance Corporal Paisley, who enlisted at age 16, was a motorcycle dispatch rider with the 4th Canadian Division and participated in the breakout from Caen, the closing of the Falaise Gap, the capture of Caen and the capture of Cussy and l'Abbaye d'Ardenne. His unit was engaged in the attack on Verrières Ridge, the operation to seize Bretteville-sur-Laize and the operation to capture Falaise. He also fought in Belgium, Holland and Germany and was in Germany when the unconditional surrender of the German army occurred.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Paisley. He is truly deserving of this special honour and our unwavering

gratitude, and now is addressed as Chevalier Ted Paisley. Merci.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, today is World Autism Awareness Day. In Ontario, support is provided for children with autism until they turn 18. Wouldn't it be great and magical and fantastic if autism was cured on every-one's 18th birthday? Obviously, that'll never happen.

Many of us have heard about the family in Ottawa who could no longer care for their severely autistic son and so they left him at a government office.

In recent weeks, my Windsor office heard from a mom with an autistic child. Her first email came to us with the subject line, "In need of help, from a struggling mom." Chassidy Theoret is a single parent with three kids, and one of them, Celia, is autistic. Celia will be turning 18 later this month. The plug will soon be pulled on her provincial support system. Celia needs care 24/7. Chassidy can't work outside the home because she cares for Celia. Without the financial help that she used to receive, the family will suffer.

Group homes cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why not pay the primary caregivers to keep autistic adults in the family home?

Speaker, people with autism have feelings just like everyone else. They may express them differently, but they too feel love, happiness, sadness and pain.

As we commemorate World Autism Awareness Day, let us join our autism families and look for ways that the government can improve their quality of life. Let's open our minds and our hearts to ensure that new opportunities are put in place as they pursue stable and meaningful lives with dignity and respect.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, in 2013, the Ontario Legislature passed a bill to recognize April as Sikh Heritage Month. April is a time when Sikh Canadians celebrate Vaisakhi, a day that marks the establishment of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith.

By proclaiming the month of April to be Sikh Heritage Month, we acknowledge the significant contributions made by Ontario's Sikh community to our province's social, cultural and economic fabric. In fact, just last night I joined the Premier and many of my caucus colleagues at a reception to mark this special occasion. It was a memorable evening. It was also a reminder of our province's incredible diversity.

In my riding of Halton, for example, the Sikh cultural association has had a strong and active presence in our community for close to 20 years. In addition to offering religious services, the association provides important cultural and social supports to Halton's Sikh residents, including Punjabi classes, traditional music lessons, translation services and granting access to a library. The

association also contributes to our local Canada Day festivities, supports the Red Cross, Salvation Army and food banks, and offers shelter to the homeless.

The Sikh cultural association is an inspiring example of an organization working tirelessly to strengthen our province's cultural richness while giving back to our local community in many ways, including Seva. There is no question that Ontario's Sikh community plays an important role in our province.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: April is organ and tissue donation awareness month, more commonly known as Be A Donor Month. I want to recognize the efforts of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, who were able to register over 254,000 individuals to become an organ and tissue donor last year alone. More than three million Ontarians, almost 27%, have already registered their consent to donate organs or tissue after their death. It's an important milestone we can celebrate, but we need to do more.

The good news: Last year, 265 organ donors saved more than 1,000 individual lives because of a transplant—a new record. As we know, one organ donor can save up to eight individuals. The challenge, the reality, is that today in Ontario there are still over 1,500 people waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.

This Easter weekend, many of us will be with our families. Potential donations have been lost because family members were not aware of their loved ones' wishes. Talk about the importance of signing up at beadonor.ca with your family, and why organ donation is important to you. While organ and tissue donation has increased significantly in Ontario, a person still dies every three days because there are not enough donors to meet the need.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network, Ontario's organ and tissue donation and transplant agency, is marking Be A Donor Month throughout the province with awareness-raising events being held in co-operation with local advocacy groups, as well as many organ donor registration drives, including 25 being held by Ontario hospitals.

It only takes two minutes to register online at www.beadonor.ca or at your local ServiceOntario centre. Let's all do our part and register to be a donor.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: Earlier this week I was happy to attend a press conference with Unifor president Jerry Dias, Unifor economist Jim Stanford and the leadership from all the GM Ontario locations on the importance of the auto sector in this province. They were here to deliver a report on the damage that would be done to Ontario if the GM plants in Oshawa and St. Catharines are closed.

The case they made is undeniable. There is a GM plant in Niagara that employs 2,000 people, many of whom live, shop and spend their time in my riding of Niagara Falls. So you see that these jobs are extremely

important to our community. These employees, most of whom make decent wages, buy their groceries, raise their kids and pay their taxes in the surrounding ridings. It's the same spinoff effect we can see in businesses. GM makes its products and supports our local manufacturers.

Our retirees depend on the sector, too: 6,000 retirees who need to know that their pensions and their futures are secure. These are workers and retirees who generate vital tax revenue to support our health care, our education, our communities and our businesses.

Mr. Speaker, they say every one job in the auto sector creates eight spinoff jobs, and you can clearly see how important a strong auto sector is. This is exactly why we need to support and extend the footprint agreement that was signed in 2009. It was a loan that kept GM from going under here in Ontario and protected thousands of jobs in the province. Unfortunately, the PC Party didn't support those loans.

1310

This government—and, quite frankly, this Legislature—needs to work with GM, Ford, Chrysler, and the unions to make sure the auto sector grows in Windsor, Oshawa and St. Catharines instead of disappearing. Communities depend on it; 26,000 jobs could be lost. These facilities are the economic anchors, and it's easy to see why this government needs to step up and support the industry in Ontario.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Speaker, I rise on your behalf today, as the neighbouring MPP of Cambridge, to acknowledge the tremendous partnership that has taken place in your riding of Brant between the Ontario Lung Association, Dave Shoots from Brantford Hyundai, and Hyundai Canada.

It's fitting that I also stand here in your place, Speaker, as we both sit on the Ontario lung health caucus and are strong advocates for lung health issues. I moved the Lung Health Act, which will help all Ontarians breathe easier.

When Dave Shoots partnered with the Ontario Lung Association more than seven years ago, they didn't dream of the loyal bond that would develop. Dave, who suffers from Aspergillosis disease, understands the struggles many lung health sufferers go through when they're suddenly short of breath.

Today Dave, at a photo-op with Brantford Hyundai, is making a \$20,000 donation to the Ontario Lung Association, marking \$120,000 he has now donated to the cause over the past seven years. Between matching contributions from Hyundai Canada, Dave Shoots, and revenue earned from sponsorship of the Walter Gretzky Street Hockey Tournament and the annual Phyllis Gretzky Memorial Golf Classic, over \$245,000 have been raised towards lung health research.

On your behalf, I'd like to thank Dave Shoots for his generosity, Hyundai Canada, and Sandy Lee, who is the Ontario Lung Association Volunteer Fund and Development Coordinator.

This partnership, Speaker, is a partnership between commerce and not-for-profit, and should be held up as a classic example for why it's so very important to acknowledge and encourage corporate gift giving.

DREAM BIG

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Last Thursday, I had the pleasure of attending the Dream Big event in the town of Clinton. The Dream Big event aims to help those with developmental disabilities realize that they can achieve their dreams. The theme of the event was "Inclusion, Reaching Goals and Overcoming Obstacles." Actress Lauren Potter, who portrays Becky Jackson on the TV show Glee, was the guest speaker, and she just shone at that event. She was indeed very motivational.

Foundations Huron is a not-for-profit organization that falls under Community Living—Central Huron, and it was the foundation that hosted this evening. The foundation aims to assist young adults with developmental disabilities to make the transition from high school to adult life. Foundations Huron works with individuals to set goals; engage in community activities and events; increase employment, volunteer and social opportunities; and learn self-advocacy and leadership skills.

In terms of self-advocacy and realizing a dream, I'd like to give a shout-out to a young champion from Seaforth, Ontario, by the name of Morgan. He's 11 years old and he suffers from ASD, a form of autism. This morning he had his dream realized by hosting a school assembly to talk more about autism and ASD so that the kids in his school understand what he lives with every day. His goal was to raise \$750. I'd like to congratulate him because, as of noon hour today, he raised \$1,000, and the Brussels Optimists donated \$10,000 as well. Congratulations, Morgan.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: It's my pleasure to stand in the House today to commemorate World Autism Awareness Day.

Designated in 2008 by the UN General Assembly, World Autism Awareness Day aims to increase awareness about autism amongst all levels of society around the world. I'm also happy to say that the city of Burlington in my riding, along with other municipalities from Halton region, have also declared today to be Autism Awareness Day.

I recently I had the privilege of meeting with members of PAATH, Parents of Adults with Autism Transitioning with Hope, a support group of parents of high-functioning adults with autism. Located in Halton region, PAATH is the only adult-focused autism group in central-west Ontario. Their mission is to bridge the gap between exclusion and community inclusion, between services for children with autism and young adults who fall between the cracks as those supports end. PAATH participants are researching ways to improve appropriate

supports and inclusion in the areas of employment, social activities, housing, health, education and financial assistance.

In the last seven years the number of children in Ontario schools with ASD has gone from 700 to 18,000. These children are supported throughout school, but when they are graduating from high school they want to continue to evolve as adults, as all young people do. They want to become contributing members of society, and they need appropriate supports.

Organizations like PAATH and the loving parents who are members are leading the way in this endeavour. Through World Autism Awareness Day, we can help them and other groups like them to fulfill their goals of helping Ontarians living with autism to be happy, healthy and productive members of our communities.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Mr. Speaker, Sikhs have lived in Ontario since the middle of the 20th century, and they represent a growing and dynamic population. They have contributed to the development and the prosperity of this province and this country.

April 1, the beginning of Sikh Heritage Month, gives Ontarians of all faiths and backgrounds the opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate not only themselves but future generations on the contributions of Sikhs in Ontario.

The month of April is significant to Sikhs as it includes the celebration of Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi marks the establishment of the Khalsa.

One of the teachings of Sikhism is selfless service, also known as Seva. Equality and Seva are the guiding principles of the Sikh region. Seva is the principle of volunteer or charitable work being performed without any thought of reward or return. It is defined beautifully by Guru Ram Dass, who said, "Helping out is not some special skill. It is not the domain of rare individuals. It is not confined to a single part of our lives. We simply heed the call of that natural impulse within and follow it where it leads us."

Mr. Speaker, as a proud Sikh myself, I encourage all members of the House and all Ontarians to partake in the many events this month celebrating Sikhs and their contribution to our communities, our province and our country.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As all my colleagues know, I usually have a checklist of issues that I need to bring to your attention. I missed a couple, so I want to bring them to you today—and that is, now, for you to show your appreciation, because this is the last day for our pages. I think we should say thank you to them for the wonderful work they did.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They did an absolutely wonderful job, and I thank them for that—especially the one from Brantford; I don't know why.

Also, I did have a message for the House, and I'll give it now. I wish for you all a safe, happy, holy Easter, and that you spend some time with your family, and you have an opportunity to do some constituency work, which I know all of you will be doing during the const week.

Happy Easter to each and every one of you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Madame Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / *Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act includes a number of small but important measures that will improve the efficiency and responsiveness of the government.

La première version de ce projet de loi a été présentée il y a plus d'une année, mais la Loi sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, dont je parle aujourd'hui, va plus loin. La loi proposée modifie désormais jusqu'à 15 lois différentes.

While some of these changes are as small as refreshing the wording in current statutes, others have the potential to impact the lives of Ontarians every day.

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATION ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2015

Ms. Fife moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr18, An Act respecting The Centre for International Governance Innovation.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION
AMENDMENT ACT (SENIOR
ADMINISTRATORS OF UNIVERSITIES
AND COLLEGES), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA RÉMUNÉRATION
DES CADRES DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC
(CADRES SUPÉRIEURS
DES UNIVERSITÉS ET COLLÈGES)

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to amend the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 to prohibit additional compensation in lieu of administrative leave / Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic pour interdire le versement d'une rémunération additionnelle en remplacement d'un congé administratif.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This bill amends the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014, otherwise known as Bill 8, to prevent university and college boards of governors from negotiating contracts that compensate senior administrators if they forgo an administrative leave to which they are otherwise entitled.

The legislation would disallow any future contracts like that negotiated with the president of Western University.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introduction of bills? Motions?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hoping the member doesn't get caught on heckling in the afternoon.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY
JOURNÉE MONDIALE
DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'AUTISME

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I rise in the House today to recognize World Autism Awareness Day. Every year on April 2, we join together to promote greater understanding of autism spectrum disorder and to celebrate the accomplishments made by those who live with ASD each and every day.

For the last 12 years, this government has been committed to making a difference in the lives of those affected by ASD. We have more than quadrupled the investments in autism services for children and youth.

Ces investissements ont permis à un plus grand nombre d'enfants et de jeunes d'accéder aux services nécessaires plus tôt, notamment l'intervention comportementale intensive, ou thérapie ICI.

In addition to the added supports and services, these investments have allowed service providers to diversify the services they provide, giving children and youth with ASD and their families a more tailored approach to therapy through things like:

—applied behaviour analysis-based services;

—respite programs that provide families with temporary relief from the stress of caring for children with ASD;

—summer and March break camps for children and youth with autism where they can broaden their experiences in a new setting; and

—joint initiatives with other ministries, such as connections for students with the Ministry of Education to help children with ASD transition through school successfully.

Our government has also invested heavily in ASD research, specifically into the genetic causes of ASD, evidence-based best practices, and we've established the ASD clinical expert committee to provide the ministry with ongoing clinical advice and guidance.

Speaker, I'm sure everyone will agree that every child deserves supports that can enable him or her to reach their absolute full potential. Every child with autism is unique, as are their personal circumstances, and how best to address their needs can vary. This is why, as part of my mandate letter, I've been asked by the Premier to develop an autism strategy, a strategy that will focus on developing and implementing programs that will improve the experience and outcomes for children and youth with ASD.

The Autism Parent Resource Kit that was launched last spring is another way we are helping families to get the services they need more efficiently, effectively and earlier. This Web-based resource kit provides information and resources to support families of children with ASD at all stages of their child's progress and development.

I want to acknowledge the very important contribution of Aiden Lee, who is here in the Legislature, for his important initiative. Aiden is a remarkable child and someone living with ASD. He's the artist behind the beautiful cover on the resource kit, and it's called "the Autism Dragon." Aiden's dragon is a fierce fighter in the campaign to raise awareness and acceptance of ASD all over the world. Thank you very much, Aiden, for what you've done.

Applause.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I had breakfast with Aiden and his family today. He painted me a beautiful black salmon painting for my office. I learned a lot about black salmon and how they're different and how they don't always swim with the pack but they have a plan and they have a direction. Thank you so much, Aiden. It's very, very meaningful.

En tant que gouvernement, nous écoutons les familles, les cliniciens, les enseignants et les spécialistes et nous collaborons avec eux, y compris avec les personnes auxquelles j'ai parlé durant mes consultations exhaustives en tant qu'adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse d'alors, le D^r Eric Hoskins, il y a trois ans de cela. Merci, Docteur Hoskins.

This experience armed us with the right information, from the people on the ground, from the people living with children with special needs, to give us a better understanding of the bigger picture and to develop a long-term strategy for children and youth with all kinds of special needs, including ASD. We want to have the greatest impact. That means seizing opportunities to do more and be more effective in what we already do.

Our Special Needs Strategy, launched in February of last year, is focused on strengthening service for children and youth with special needs, including those with ASD by:

- identifying needs earlier and getting the help they need through a developmental screen;
- better coordinating service planning for children with multiple and/or complex special needs, including ASD; and
- making rehab services more seamless from birth right through the school years.

It's a long-term strategy that involves four ministries working together with families, the sector and service providers. The strategy will continue to evolve and adapt as we continue to listen to and learn from young people with special needs, parents, service providers, researchers and advocates. It's part of our ongoing commitment to helping everyone touched by ASD.

Thank you again for allowing me the time to recognize this very important day—and I want to thank all my colleagues who have done so in the House here today, as well—to highlight the dedication of families touched by ASD and the people who provide unwavering support to those in need. You are all a wonderful example to live by.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I am proud to rise today to speak on World Autism Awareness Day, and to welcome to the Legislature representatives from the autism society. On December 18, 2007, the United Nations unanimously adopted a resolution that designated April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day.

Autism is generally defined as a developmental disorder characterized by difficulty with social interaction and forming relationships, as well as perceptual, cognitive and behavioural symptoms.

Each and every case of autism is unique in the ways it manifests and in the ways it affects the person, and this is reflected in the symbol chosen to represent the autism awareness campaign: a puzzle of colours that highlights the diversity of people living with autism, but also a

wonderful reminder that autistic people are part of our communities and deserve our support and care.

When the autism society asked its followers to describe what the puzzle ribbon meant to them, some of the answers included:

- “that I am not alone”;
- “that I am part of the great puzzle of life”;

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- “It means that I am a major confusion to people”;
- “That even though we're all different, we all belong and are needed.”

Despite the significant progress made over the years in understanding autism and developing new methods for managing the condition and working with people affected by it, we still do not know what causes autism, nor have we determined whether a cure is possible.

Parenting an autistic child or caring for an autistic adult requires outstanding levels of commitment, empathy and determination. Because of the complexity of the autism spectrum, many children and adults with autism continue to face the daily challenge of stigma, unemployment and lack of adequate support services. Their best chance to realize their potential is through early intervention as soon as the signs of autism appear.

As public officials, it is our duty to ensure that this is made available to all families who suspect their child may be autistic. In Ontario, there still needs to be a lot of work done in order to make this aim a reality.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, developmental services agencies have not seen a funding increase in years, despite a strong surge in demand, a growing wait-list, and an ongoing challenge with staff retention. When there have been no funding increases for more than five years—and, for one social services agency in my riding, for more than 11 years—the only way to cover increases in hydro rates, heating and fuel costs, wage increases and general inflation is to lay off staff.

The system is failing too many children and families, and something must change. Without steady and early developmental aid, children with autism will find it harder to integrate into the educational system and into the workforce. By the United Nations' own estimate, 80% of adults with autism are unemployed. We know that people affected by autism can and do flourish when they are given the right support and we welcome them with an open mind.

Autism Awareness Day initiatives remind the public that autism exists and comes in many forms. If we are to tackle unemployment among autistic adults, our efforts must extend beyond supportive words every April 2. We must take immediate and meaningful action to clear our developmental services wait-lists, ensure our educational system can cater to the needs of autistic children, and help employers who are willing to give autistic adults the stability, dignity and social integration that a job can provide.

Speaker, I have a nephew who suffers from autism. He is one of the lucky ones, for he received an early diagnosis which allowed his parents to proactively seek

out the early interventions that are crucial in letting Kieran live a full and rewarding life. It wasn't easy, but the speech therapy and the one-on-one time spent with him working on his strengths have made a difference.

The member from Thornhill relayed to me a story from a mother in her riding whose autistic son had a meltdown in the local mall. A female security guard went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the situation was not triggered further by remaining calm and professional during what was an intense time, helping prevent a meltdown from escalating.

We are all aware of autism and how it affects its sufferers. We can all make our community a more welcoming and safe place for autistic people and their families. We need to remember that it takes a village to raise a child.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Miss Monique Taylor: Today, flags are being raised in communities all across Ontario in recognition of Autism Awareness Day. Those communities are responding to the call from Autism Ontario and their Raise the Flag campaign. They have a website dedicated to the campaign: raisetheflagforautism.com. It includes a wonderful video that does an excellent job of raising awareness of what it means to live with autism, and I would encourage all members and anyone who's watching to log on and to watch it.

The video helps us realize that people with autism are just, as they say, a little bit different. They might think a little bit different; they might act or react a little bit different. Each case is different and it manifests in different ways.

Parents often talk about the challenges involved with taking their autistic child out to public places and the stress that this adds to their lives. This video explains how we can all help by understanding and being more accepting.

Since some of us in this Legislature have not had the ability to see that video yet, I would like to share a few quotes:

"We need to help educate those that don't understand or are a little afraid, and see the beauty that each child has," or, "It makes a difference if the whole community is on board with accepting that this is an everyday thing now."

One of the parents in the video was Wayne Griffiths. He's the treasurer of the Hamilton chapter of Autism Ontario. Wayne and countless other families have a harder job as parents than most of us, but they still find the time to hold events to raise funds and offer support to each other as they try to find their way through the maze of services and supports for people with autism spectrum disorder.

I've spent some time with Wayne and other families, and I take my hat off to them for the fantastic work they do just trying to get what is best for their children. The video is very uplifting, and focuses on the potential within those who have autism. It talks about what can be done, and from the story I heard today, Aiden's dragon is

part of that story. And it makes us think about what the future could be like. As the video ends, we are left with one silent statement on the screen: "Imagine a community that sees the potential in each and every one of them." That, Speaker, is what "awareness" means. That is why today we have this day.

Perhaps with all that awareness will come a broader realization that the government must take action to ensure that services, treatments and supports are there when they are needed. We know that IBI treatment is most effective when it starts before the age of four. We know that early diagnosis, preferably before the age of two, is crucial to the well-being of a child. It can also cut down the cost through reduced need for supports and services later in life. But, as the Auditor General has pointed out, the median age for diagnosis of autism is three years old, and treatment regularly does not get under way until the child is almost seven. There continue to be more children on wait-lists for IBI treatment than there are receiving it.

In an attempt to reduce the wait-lists, some children get cut off. Their parents have seen the marked improvements in their child from the treatment and are left wondering where they will go, what they will do and how they will now manage to provide the best possible future for their child. And they'd better not look at our schools, because recent Liberal cuts to education are going to have a devastating effect on special needs education. Already terribly underfunded, supports for children with autism in our schools will be even less.

In addition to kids already struggling to get the help they need, they are joined by kids transitioning to school too soon with access to less services. All the work put into intensive therapy will be lost. This typical Liberal short-sightedness makes absolutely no sense.

But autism isn't just about children—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Miss Monique Taylor: But autism isn't just about children; it's a lifelong condition that doesn't go away as you age. After high school, there is little support for youth who want post-secondary education. There is a huge need for affordable, safe, supported housing. People with autism want to be, can be and deserve to be a meaningful part of our communities. With understanding, acceptance, timely services and appropriate supports, they can be just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

“Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

“Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase” by “an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it and give it to page Rahul.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the community of Windsor–Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

“Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would” have created “1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

“Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

“Whereas the inability of Ford and ... Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector.”

I fully agree with this. I will affix my name and give it to page Emma to take up to the desk.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que les organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

C'est avec fierté que je vais signer cette pétition.

PERSONAL-INJURY LAWYERS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas personal-injury lawyers often charge contingency fees of up to 45% of a settlement; and

“Whereas it is in the public interest for reasons of transparency, consumer protection and public accountability that the Ontario superintendent of insurance be authorized to collect from personal-injury lawyers and paralegals representing claimants on tort and accident benefits claims, information on case-specific fee arrangements, costs, disbursements and referral fees to determine the impact of such fee arrangements on the cost of auto insurance in Ontario;

“Whereas consumers do not understand how these fees are calculated;

“Whereas the high costs of hiring a lawyer are preventing Ontarians from accessing justice;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government introduce legislation to cap the maximum rates that personal-injury lawyers charge injured motorists;

“That personal-injury lawyers be required to submit to the superintendent of insurance information on fees, disbursements and referral arrangements;

“That the superintendent publicly publish an annual report on the information collected;

“That the superintendent develop a consumer-friendly fee disclosure statement that must be used by personal-injury lawyers.”

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition and give it to page Demily.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: “To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

“Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

“Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

“Whereas the inability of Ford and ... Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector.”

I fully agree and will add my name and give it to the page for submission to the Clerk.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

“Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

“Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Aiden.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’ RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as follows:

“Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

“Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

“(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

“(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

“(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Natasha to take to the table.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

“Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

“Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

“Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of

French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

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“Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that ‘... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto’; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

“Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating” a suitable “under-utilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school (grades 7-12) in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live.”

I support the petition. I will give my petition to page Cameron.

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

“Whereas Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

“Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To support Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay.”

For obvious reasons, I support this bill and pass it to the great page Ranen from Dufferin–Caledon.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This is a petition collected from people in Windsor, Essex county and Chatham–Kent.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital.”

I fully agree with this petition, will sign my name and give it to Kari to take to the Clerk.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise here this afternoon to read this petition entitled “Elimination of Microbeads from Cosmetic Products.” It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas microbeads are tiny plastics less than one millimetre in diameter which pass through our water filtration systems and get into our rivers and the Great Lakes; and

“Whereas these microbeads represent a growing presence in our Great Lakes and are contributing to the plastic pollution of our freshwater lakes and rivers; and

“Whereas the scientific research and data collected to date has shown that microbeads that get into our water system collect toxins and organisms mistake these microbeads for food and these microbeads can move up our food chain;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario government to ban the creation and addition of microbeads to cosmetic products and all other related health and beauty products; and

“The Ministry of the Environment conduct an annual study of the Great Lakes analyzing the waters for the presence of microbeads.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and send it down to the table with Marin.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, sir: I want to introduce some of the wonderful people who are sitting in the gallery, whom I didn’t have a chance to introduce earlier: Reverend Brent Hawkes from MCC Toronto; trans lobby group members Christin Milloy, Susan Gapka, Stephanie Walsh, Serena Vyanoski and Melissa Rhind; lawyer and activist Maurice Tomlinson; activist Jackie Lucas; the mother of a trans youth, Jessica Skinner, with her kids Stella Skinner, Darwin Skinner and Gray Skinner; Toronto psychotherapist Hershel Russell; Fred Hahn is making his way here from CUPE; lawyer Nicole Nussbaum; all those watching internationally from Spain and the UK; and a whole school

full of kids in Hamilton, at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

AFFIRMING SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L’AFFIRMATION DE L’ORIENTATION SEXUELLE ET DE L’IDENTITÉ SEXUELLE

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 regarding efforts to change or direct sexual orientation or gender identity / *Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’assurance-santé et la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées à l’égard des interventions visant à changer ou à influencer l’orientation sexuelle ou l’identité sexuelle.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to everyone who is here, and certainly to everyone who is watching out there, too, in fact, around the world.

This bill does two very simple things: It bans conversion or reparative therapy for those who are 18 and under, and it delists it for everyone. Adults are free to do what adults will do, but we shouldn’t be paying for this through OHIP.

I also want to dedicate it to some folk. I want to dedicate it to Leelah Alcorn, a 17-year-old who committed suicide December 28. She was a trans young person, and her final words were, “Fix society. Please.”

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, thank you.

She came out to her parents. They tried to fix her; they couldn’t. They took her to a therapist. The therapist tried to fix her; he couldn’t. And those were her final words.

Because of Leelah Alcorn, there was a change.org online petition. It gained 300,000 signatures; by now, probably more.

So I want to dedicate it to her.

I also want to dedicate it to all of those victims—and these are all actions that have been taken under the heading “conversion” or “reparative” therapy—who have been electroshocked, shamed, have suffered induced vomiting or induced paralysis, been told they’re not female or male enough to be female or male, and, from the horrible to the ridiculous, to those who have been told that snapping an elastic on their wrist every time they felt same-sex attraction was going to make them straight—to all of those victims of reparative or conversion therapy.

We should know by now—there have been studies done—that those children who have been through conversion therapy are eight times—eight times—more likely to commit suicide than those who have not.

Let’s talk about this community, the LBGQT community. By the way, I’m honoured to be the very first LBGQT critic at Queen’s Park ever. The LBGQT community has double the post-traumatic stress disorder risk; triple the suicide risk among youth. When you’re looking at trans youth, it’s even worse: 77% have considered suicide, 48% have attempted suicide, 20% suffer physical violence, and 50% of our trans population live on less than \$15,000 a year.

If we think that violence, if we think that suicide, if we think that this is all getting better, there’s a very frightening statistic. This is an American statistic, but it bears note here as well because we’re not that different. Between 2007 and 2009, hate crimes doubled against those who are LGBT.

Just in terms of the ex-gay movement and reparative or conversion therapy, there’s something that I think viewers would be very interested in knowing. The man who started Exodus, the largest ex-gay movement ever in the world, in the United States—it was operating for 40 years. This came out of a right-wing fundamentalist background. Of course, their aim was to turn LGBT folk straight. This is a quote from him. It’s from the #BornPerfect site.

He said, “Instead, the people who came to us for help [became] more troubled and depressed.” Remember, this is the man who started Exodus. “One man ... slashed his genitals with a razor and poured Drano on the wounds....”

“In the almost 40 years since I started Exodus, I never met a gay person who became heterosexual through conversion therapy or ex-gay programs”—40 years of the Exodus movement. He was the founder. He’s now, we will all be happy to know, out, proud and living with his partner.

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I want to read a few quotes here from a number of professional organizations that come out, of course, against reparative or conversion therapy.

The Canadian Association for Social Work Education has declared, “Any professional’s attempt to alter the gender identity or expression of a young person to align with social norms is considered unethical and an abuse of power and authority.”

Here’s another one—and this was from a panellist at our presser, Dr. Joey Bonifacio, a pediatrician and lead at the transgender youth clinic at SickKids. He said, “We need more dialogue around helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. Such legislation is deeply needed and will certainly help countless LGBT youth, a population whose mental and physical health and well-being are at risk.”

I also want to quote from Jack Pyne, who is a Trudeau scholar and researcher at McMaster, who wrote a wonderful column in this week’s *Now*. He wrote, “This ... legislation is ground-breaking. MPP Cheri DiNovo is

sending a strong message to health and mental health practitioners ... : 'If your practice does not respect gender diversity, if in fact, you insist on treating gender diversity in young people as a disorder to be cured or prevented, then you will no longer have the use of public funds to do so.' This bill is the first step in bringing OHIP funding in line with our new Ontario human rights protections for gender identity and gender expression."

I could go on: The Canadian Psychological Association, the American Psychological Association, the Canadian Paediatric Society, the World Professional Association of Transgender Health, the International Federation of Social Workers and on. There is in fact not one professional body anywhere in the world that you could find that would support conversion or reparative therapy.

But here's the problem: It's still going on. Folk have asked me why I brought this bill forward. I can tell you that when I was on the gay-straight alliance committee and we travelled the province with that bill, we had psychiatrists come before that committee who testified that the majority of their practice was conversion therapy. Now, of course, many of them were informed by fundamentalist religious convictions. I'm delighted to see that Brent Hawkes is here. I myself am a reverend doctor. We stand, as do many others across the faith spectrum, to say that this has nothing to do with faith or religion.

We've seen the psychiatrists come forward. We know that this has been going on. We know that some of our largest institutions are reviewing their policies and practices because of the effect on victims. We've heard the testimony of the victims, Erika Muse and others. She was on our presser, and came out very vocally and publicly and said that when she came out at 16, she went to an institution that was supposed to help her, the only place that she could go, and there she was told she looked too male to ever be female. She was told this not one on-one in a counselling session; she was told this before interns and other students of medicine.

We've heard from those who teach psychiatrists, who clearly condone these practices. If publicity, if simply coming out with strongly worded statements, if the victims' testimony was enough, I wouldn't be standing here. Why do we need this bill? Why do we need an outright ban? Because these are children we're talking about. These are eight-year-olds; these are five-year-olds. I was on CBC today and we heard from a mother with a five-year-old who took her to a therapist to try to fix her, to try to change her. This mother had the wherewithal to know that something wasn't right and found someone like Dr. Bonifacio at SickKids who helped her. But the first point of intake didn't at all. We have to protect those children. They're not going to come forward to any regulatory body. Children are not going to make complaints to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Children are not going to be able to do that. We have to do it for them. That is why California, Washington, New Jersey—all have brought in outright bans.

Again, particularly here in Ontario where we have a health care program, we should not be paying for it. We

should not be condoning it, and in fact we need to ban it for children. That's why an outright ban.

I want to just briefly talk about—I've only got a couple of minutes left—the theory, the philosophy behind conversion or reparative therapy. Even when the therapists say it's done to help the child, the simple reality is that the theory behind it is this: that there's something better about being straight than there is about being LGBT, that there's something more perfect, more normal, more desirable about being straight than being LGBT. That is exactly the philosophy and the theory. That's exactly what we should absolutely condemn, that there is nothing better about being straight than being LGBT. In fact we are, as the hashtag says, all of us, born perfect.

In fact, it's our diversity that makes us the province that we are, and we are already a beacon to the world where this is concerned; I have no doubt. That's again another reason why this is so retrograde, that it's going on is so overdue—and our action is so necessary.

Usually the reaction I get from folk—when I talk about this bill and when I talk about the movement to ban it and delist it from OHIP, the first thing I hear is that people can't believe it's actually being done. They can't believe it's going on. They thought this was over a long time ago. The second reaction is, "We're paying for this and we can't even get an eye exam under OHIP? We can't get dental care under OHIP, but we're paying for reparative and conversion therapy?" That's the second reaction. So it's to those two reactions that we stand here in this place and say, "Absolutely. Ontario has moved beyond this. It's time to do the right thing."

Every caller who called into CBC, with one exception, over noon talked about the damages of reparative or conversion therapy still going on on their children. Again, it's not billed under any particular DSM code. It's billed as counselling hours. Again, that's the reason it has to be banned, because it will still be billed under counselling hours if we don't act and if we don't act decisively.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to the debate here today. I'm looking forward to the response. And I'm doing it—I think we're all doing it—for our children.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to say to the audience that you are always welcome in the chamber, but I'd ask you to refrain from participating in the clapping that is going on.

Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased to be here this afternoon, and I'm very pleased to be able to be here to speak in favour of this bill and to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for bringing it forward.

Ensuring the protection and the rights of Ontario's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community is something that is very important to me, and it's important to our government. The concept of conversion therapy contrasts starkly with the fundamental values on which

Ontario is built. It's so important that we make it clear that people have the right to be who they are in Ontario.

Ontario is a province of acceptance, a province of tolerance and a province that draws strength from its diversity. In Ontario people have the right to be who they are. There is no place in Ontario for conversion therapy. It is a practice, as the member has said, that is based on the premise that being gay or transgendered is wrong and needs to be corrected.

In Ontario we work to ensure that health care patients receive evidence-based care and that they're treated ethically, equitably and fairly. The use of conversion therapy to dissuade a person from self-identifying results in neither outcome and should not be tolerated in Ontario.

I want to point out that no current medical guidelines in Ontario support treatment that would aim to change or convert someone away from being LGBT, and I think the member has alluded to that. Conversion therapy, as such, is not in accordance with the standards of medical practice. But let me be clear: If there is more that we need to do to make the medical community aware of this, then we will absolutely do that. In fact, Minister Hoskins will be sending a letter to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and other relevant colleges explaining that their rules should not allow conversion therapy. We'll work with them, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that nobody is subject to this treatment and that this is clear to all Ontarians, because the idea of conversion therapy is dangerous.

1410

When I came out at the age of 37, I had the benefit of 36 years of life experience, and I understood my journey in a way that an eight-year-old or a nine-year-old or a 13-year-old or a 14-year-old cannot possibly. They don't have the advantage of those years and that understanding. They can be vulnerable to the notion that being gay is a choice rather than being integral to who you are.

It's unacceptable for anyone to be told that they need to be something different than who they are. There have been generations of people whose families and society have tried to make them change. Those people, as the member has said, are right here with us—people who have been told over and over again that they are not what they should be.

We should have moved on from that. We should have moved beyond the mentality that being gay or trans is a choice. The unfortunate thing is that some people have not moved beyond those ideas. That's why we have to remain vigilant and we have to continually work to uphold the rights that we enjoy.

I think what we have all seen recently in Indiana and in Arkansas points to that need for vigilance. I'm encouraged to hear of the changes that are being made in the legislation, but the fact that such a divisive law could be signed in the first place in 2015 is so troubling. As I said yesterday, it is totally unacceptable in the 21st century for a law to undermine basic human rights. What's even more offensive is that there are politicians

who believe that they can win elections by creating wedges that seek to divide. I am proud to say that it's not the way we see things in Ontario; it's not who we are in Ontario.

Having said that, I'm disappointed to see that our own federal government recently took steps to weaken the transgender bill of rights, which would add gender identity to the federal human rights code. I'm proud that our member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Parkdale—High Park joined together to voice their disappointment, as well.

My job as Premier of this province is to bring people together, to find ways that we can live more safely together in more harmony; not to create hostility. The work that we're doing with our Sexual Violence Action Plan is part of that goal.

The supports that Ontario provides specifically for health issues affecting LGBT and gender non-conforming people are part of that, as well. In 2008 OHIP re-insured sex reassignment surgery, and CAMH's gender identity clinic uses the World Professional Association for Transgender Health guidelines. The Ministry of Health funds a research and knowledge translation organization called Rainbow Health Ontario, which has long served the health needs of the LGBT community. RHO works with LHINs across the province and has now trained close to 700 health care practitioners in the best practices of trans and gender non-conforming patients across Ontario.

But I know, and we all know, that there's more work that has to be done. Part of that is the vigilance that I just referred to. Part of it is also taking part in debates like the one that we're having today—and I'm very glad that we are.

I want to thank again the member for Parkdale—High Park for bringing this bill to the Legislature. I hope that it will spark more conversation, more support and more acceptance, because that is what we should all be about. I'm happy to support the bill in principle, and, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to it being studied at committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I am honoured to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to speak in support of Bill 77, the Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act. I will be splitting my time with the member from Nepean—Carleton as well as the member from Thornhill.

I would like to start by thanking my colleague the member from Parkdale—High Park for bringing forward this bill. She has been a true trailblazer on LGBT issues since being elected to office and continues to be a champion for the community. Thank you very much.

I was very pleased to join her to co-sponsor Toby's law several years ago, which furthered efforts to build a province free from discrimination. I'm proud of the efforts taken through Toby's Act to stand up for equal treatment without discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression. But, as the member from Parkdale—High Park's current bill indicates, there are still

steps that need to be taken to eradicate injustice and enshrine the rights of the LGBT community into law.

Even though the American Psychiatric Association and the US National Association of Social Workers have long ago repudiated so-called conversion therapy, we have been confronted with the reality that this dubious practice still exists in Ontario today. Unfortunately, the price that is paid if we don't take action is far too great. Suicide rates among LGBT individuals are frighteningly high. Approximately 41% of people who are transgender or gender non-conforming have attempted suicide sometime in their lives.

Last year, the world witnessed the heartbreaking death of Ohio teen Leelah Alcorn. After her parents sent her to a therapist who attempted to so-called fix her, Leelah had had enough and decided to take her own life. Her tragic and senseless death should serve as a reminder for everyone here of the severe consequences associated with continuing to permit discrimination in the form of conversion therapy.

For those who have suffered a lifetime of hardship just on the basis of being who they are, I hope that the fact that we're at least debating this issue here in this Legislature today provides some optimism of the future of our province. Perhaps the fact that we are here today in support of Bill 77 will provide some hope that here in Ontario we will not tolerate questionable practices that attempt to suppress people's true identities.

As with any piece of legislation, we are going to endeavour to get this right. Certainly Ontario offers some of the most well-developed psychological methods and practices in the world.

I look forward to the committee deliberations on Bill 77 and having the experts coming forward to offer us their best advice. I'm sure that forum will provide useful information that will make sure that this harmful practice is abolished in the province of Ontario. I'm very pleased to hear that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has taken steps to discuss the issue with the regulatory colleges in making sure that this practice goes no further.

I think that this is going to take the work of many people, including all of us here in this Legislature, and so I think it's fair to say that probably all of the members are going to be supporting it here today. But bravo again to the member from Parkdale-High Park for bringing this forward. Thank you for your strength in this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm truly honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 77, the Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act. I want to start by recognizing and thanking all of the people who joined us here in the chamber today in the various galleries to watch this important debate. Of course, I also want to recognize the fantastic work of the MPP for Parkdale-High Park, Cheri DiNovo, that she does overall, but also specifically that she has done for LGBTQ issues in this province. Not only has she been doing that work here in this House, but she has been doing that work over the course of her

career. In fact, she has been doing that work for her entire life. She has dedicated much of her life to LGBTQ issues, to justice for the LGBTQ community, and her hard work has made great changes in this province.

It was, in fact, thanks to her hard work—in part to her hard work and the work of others—that students have the right to form gay-straight alliances in their schools in this province, and it's because of Toby's law and the protections that it provided that, in fact, we are now building on that with Bill 77.

It's an important piece of legislation, Speaker. It addresses an issue that has been perhaps overlooked, but it's an issue that is causing extraordinary and incredible pain to some of our most vulnerable young people.

1420

The issue was ignored so completely that even the Minister of Health did not know it was a problem when Cheri first raised it here in the Legislature. Since then, I believe that the minister has talked about the issue and has acknowledged that it exists here in this province. In fact, shortly after it became public, in terms of being in the public discourse, we saw CAMH actually launch a complete review of their treatment of trans children and youth.

It was a problem, and continues to be a problem. It took the hard work of the LGBTQ community to bring that issue forward and find a way to make it more public, to make it more amplified. That is what Cheri has been doing. She has worked with the LGBTQ community to bring the issue more into the public realm, and I want to thank those folks in the community who have had the courage to do that work. Again, thanks to Cheri DiNovo, MPP for Parkdale-High Park—who is a very strong MPP—for bringing this to our Legislature.

We all know what a challenging time our own developmental years are. Imagine being told by your parents and by a doctor, a person of authority, that something you know about yourself fundamentally, something that you know truly to be who you are—imagine being told by those people that it is wrong, that what you believe about yourself and who you are is simply wrong and has to be fixed or changed. Imagine the damage that would cause to a young person.

We know, and all the research tells us, how important family support for a youth's self-identified sexual orientation and gender identity are to their self-esteem, how important that is for their well-being and for their personal safety. However, we know that there are doctors—respected practitioners of medicine and psychotherapy—who continue to practise so-called conversion therapy. We know that these doctors are doing irreparable harm to vulnerable youth in our province. This is happening when we know that trans youth already face high rates of assault and harassment just because of who they are.

We know that nearly half of all trans youth have attempted suicide, and many more have considered it. This clearly means that we, as a society, are failing these kids, and that we need to do much, much better to protect

them and support them. This bill is an extremely important step in that direction.

The Canadian Association of Social Workers has said in a statement that, “Any professional’s attempt to alter the gender identity or expression of a young person to align with social norms is considered unethical and an abuse of power and authority.” I agree, Speaker. New Democrats agree. That is why this bill is necessary in Ontario.

All Ontarians deserve the right to be the people that they are—period—and to live and study and work, and to be free of harassment and discrimination in any activity they undertake. This legislation ensures that Ontario’s youth have a right to be who they are, to self-identify their gender. This legislation will protect them from an immoral practice that has no place in the province of Ontario or, frankly, in any free and accepting society.

This bill is important. It’s necessary. New Democrats are very proud of our MPP, Cheri DiNovo, for bringing it forward, and we are proudly going to be supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I was elected 26 years ago, in the Prairies, and if you had told me when I was a little kid, when I was 10, 11 or 12 years old, that that would ever happen, I would have told you that that just didn’t happen. When I actually look at the life I have, I would say that, for most of it, it’s been unimaginable. Remember, I came out almost this month 44 years ago. I was just barely 14, and I remember my first friend—I played football, and I had a buddy. I played football because I figured out that if I imitated what straight guys were like I wouldn’t get beaten up. And I have to tell you, straight guys are easy to imitate. I remember, after I told my friend John Kotter that I was gay—and he never was my friend after that—I went home and I threw up and I cried and I told my mother, who told me that it was a treatable disease and I should go see a psychiatrist. If you’ve met my mother, she has come a long way. You don’t say that about her son anymore.

Forty-four years as an out gay man—the only role model I had before me, really, was Harvey Milk, who was in San Francisco, who was rather remarkable but was assassinated 11 months inside that.

I remember, when I was elected mayor, the first thing they did—17 police cars showed up in Winnipeg, locked my mother and me in a vault, put a Kevlar jacket on me and told me there had never been more death threats in history that they could find in that one thing. I went into a room with about 20,000 people—and I know I share with Kathleen, having been mayor of a city, when she became Premier. Those are moments we’ll never forget.

It’s also with a mixed amount of feeling that we’re still having these debates.

To my friend Cheri: We’ve been talking about this, and I commend her for her leadership and her work. But I always feel a little other—I spent my entire life so that this wouldn’t matter, so that we don’t need to have these

bills or these speeches—because in some ways it reminds each of us of how different we are from the others and that somehow that still matters.

I really don’t like the word “ethnic.” My friend Dr. Moridi and I are both ethnic. My friend Dipika Damerla and I—we Irish folks actually have ethnicities. Especially if you’re gay and Irish, you’ve got ethnicity and then some, Oscar Wilde-like. I’m very proud as I look around this Legislature because all of us have the experience of being told we’re different in some way—*parce que nous parlons français ou parce que je suis chinois*.

I’m very proud to be part of the most diverse caucus, maybe, in the world. I say that to all members of this House. Won’t it be nice when we don’t need to do anything anymore in law?

To my friends Christin and these extraordinary men and women in the trans community who are doing more than just achieving trans rights: They’re breaking down this idea of a binary nature of male-female. Do you know what I mean? Our sexuality is so complicated.

I’ll never forget the day when my friend Liz Sandals and I were talking about the need to have options on drivers’ licences: F, M and X. She said, “I’m a woman. I want those choices. We don’t put race on drivers’ licences. Why do we define each other?” Only if we want to treat people differently do we make people other.

I was an independent municipal politician because no party thought gay people could get elected when I ran for city council and mayor. The reason I left partisan politics for a long time was simply because I couldn’t get a nomination. I’ll never forget that. I’ll never forget that those things matter.

But we also live in an idea—where we learn from feminism, which is what is at the very core of this bill: Other people don’t have the right to define us, never mind shock-therapy us into something and reinvent our bodies and our souls and our spirits and our capacity for love and intimacy. No one has the right to do that.

It’s hard. We have some tough problems. What do you say to an 11-year-old kid who is transgender, a young woman who has the body, outwardly, of a boy, or is intersex, and really wants to be a girl and doesn’t want to wait till 18?

We have to start having those conversations: that women and men own their body. It’s not about the physicality that you have. Your gender comes from your soul and your humanity.

We all know who we were. I always say, does anyone ever doubt who they were sexually attracted to at 14, when your hormones were raging? If there’s one thing we know, it’s not a choice. No matter what your body may look like when you stand in front of the mirror, it doesn’t define who you are.

I was amazed; Minister Matthews and I were going through a list. One in 100 babies born don’t have completely defined gender characteristics—one in 100. You know how many thousands of babies are born? This is not a small thing, and we have to do more.

I want to thank all of you. I want to thank these courageous people who are breaking down stereotypes,

breaking up the binary world we're living in, and thanks to the children who are here. Hopefully you'll have better choices.

Applause.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: How do you follow that? I don't think you do it justice.

I want to say, this is probably the most nervous I've ever been speaking in this assembly—and I think we all know I've spoken quite a few times—but this is a pretty important issue, and it's one I think the Legislature needs to take very seriously.

I say at the outset that I am right-wing, I'm a Conservative, but I support Cheri DiNovo's bill. I support what she's intending to do, and I support what the Minister of Health is doing with respect to the regulatory regime with the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

I'm a mother first and foremost before I am an MPP. I look at two children in the gallery today. They bring tears to my eyes, and I'll tell you why. My daughter, at 10 years old, knows exactly who she is, and I couldn't be more proud of that little girl because she does. That means that I know that those two children up there—they're about the same age as her—know exactly who they are as well. I ask any parent in the province of Ontario, whether you go to church like I do on Sundays—well, maybe not so much anymore, since I've been elected—or whether you live in downtown Toronto and you question faith, it doesn't matter: What would you do if that were your child? I know I would go to the end of the earth for my child, and I know you're going to the end of the earth for yours, and that's why I will support you. That is why the Progressive Conservative caucus will support you here today.

I don't know much about this issue, other than to say that I appreciate the words of the member from Whitby-Oshawa, who I think for a Conservative has been very outspoken on these issues, and I appreciate that. I appreciate the Premier and the member for Toronto Centre for speaking up with their own experiences. I think that's important when we stand in the assembly, that sometimes we learn about one another and what brought us to this place, not just the fact that we wear a partisan badge on our shirt.

I want to say thank you to the member for Parkdale-High Park. Over the years, I have gotten to know her. She has been a very strong advocate for her beliefs. Probably 90% of the time she and I do not agree on very much. But we have become very good friends, because we respect one another. When I was growing up and went to university at Saint FX, I was once told that you don't have to accept someone else's position; you have to respect that they have it. Today, I think we're showing the ultimate respect to our constituents when we talk about stopping conversion therapy in the province of Ontario and stopping the funding of it.

I find this debate for us to be very liberating, one that's very important and one that I think will send a very

important message—not so much to other adults and not so much to our voters, but to the next generation—that there are a tolerant, accepting and great society, where there will be a great amount of opportunity for children who are eight years old and 10 years old and 12 years old.

So, with that, I want to say thank you so much for the opportunity to participate in this debate, but in particular I'd like to say thank you to the other members, who I think all gave moving examples of why this bill should move forward and why this practice should be stopped. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am proud to rise today in this House to speak in support of Bill 77, the Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act, and I want to congratulate the member for Parkdale-High Park for her advocacy on this issue and for taking a stand on behalf of people who are gender-non-conforming, which in our gender-binary society can be very, very difficult.

It was important for me to be able to speak to this bill because I wanted to honour a close friend of mine in London who two months ago spoke publicly for the first time about his trans son, now a young man of 23, and their family's journey—a journey of love, pain and, finally, hope. I want to use the same words my friend used when he shared his story, because his words convey, in a way that statistics can't, what an abomination conversion therapy is and how we cannot—we must not—be complicit in its practice by allowing OHIP billing.

My friend's son Sean was born biologically female. Consciously or not, gender expectations are imposed on our children right from birth, and Sean was aware, from a very young age, what those gender expectations meant: how he was supposed to walk, dress, talk, and even what he was supposed to think and talk about.

In early childhood, Sean loved playing sports, especially baseball and football with the boys, and was a high academic achiever at school. But his father notes, the "tough-girl tomboy thing" only works so long.

When puberty hit, Sean found himself growing into a body and a gender that he didn't identify with and didn't understand. Sean felt suffocated by the pressures from family and friends and society to be everything that he was not. He was a young boy in a girl's body, and he felt he had no place, that he was living a lie every day.

At school, a place he used to love, he survived unimaginable bullying and assault. He felt confused and angry, which led to serious self-harm and substance abuse.

At the age of 17, Sean decided to quit school and began transitioning from female into the male he knew he was. When Sean told his father what he was doing, my friend felt deep worry and uncertainty. But he says, "My uncertainty grew into resolve when I started to see something I hadn't seen in a long time: hope, and a sense of future."

Today, Sean is a student at the University of Toronto, studying on a prestigious scholarship and determined to change the world.

Unfortunately, many trans youth do not get this kind of support from their families. They are told they need to be fixed. In despair, they take their own lives.

If I had asked my friend during Sean's painful teen years what he needed to support Sean, his answer would not have been "conversion therapy." What my friend says is, "I dream for these children that we can change society, to offer more hope, to bring diversity out of shame and hiding, and to provide the education and role models that they need in order to understand who they are, all they have to offer, and their place in our society."

For Sean and all other young people like him, we must pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: It is an honour, specifically, to speak today with such illustrious speakers on the member from Parkdale-High Park's really historic private member's bill.

I just want to mention that the member from Parkdale-High Park was a minister, professionally, at one point.

Today is Passover, so I want to wish anybody who's listening, and the members opposite, happy Passover—Chag Sameach—and happy Easter as well.

This is a diverse Legislature, I would say—not specific caucuses, but all of us altogether. We should all feel very proud, because we're not just colleagues. I think that we are kind of a family. I would hope that if we all ever got stranded somewhere, we would come to each other's aid.

As what I call a former optometrist, I'm chagrined to think that professionals would engage in what I believe the general public of Ontario do not support, which is conversion types of therapies and not accepting. As the leader of the third party said, all Ontarians deserve the right to be who they are. Everybody deserves the right to be who they are, whether they are a child or an adult.

I think that it's wrong to tell a child they are wrong. My mother used to say that you should never tell a child they're bad, because, boy, will they show you what bad is. Nobody is wrong. I think we're all different, and I think that the world would be pretty boring if we were all the same.

We're all here to offer support for each other. Just as, today, we spoke about autism, we're here to support each other, not just monetarily but to support families who have children with autism. We're here to support each other with any struggles that we have, physically, emotionally, academically. We really need to build a society where we're there to help. If your neighbour's child is struggling in math, why not go there and help them?

1440

I think the fact that there's eight times the suicide rate for anybody who has gone through conversion therapy—the conversion therapy might not be the cause, but it's certainly indicative of what it means. It means this was an individual who was rejected—rejected by their family, maybe rejected by their friends—and it's the rejection that is causing the suicide.

We as legislators have to set an example. I think that, too often, parents see children as an extension of themselves and not as individuals. Maybe that's different generations. Maybe it's even different cultures and different people from different backgrounds.

But I know, myself, having grown up in a house with two parents who were there to see me into adulthood—I had a father who struggled with that. He liked opera, and we should therefore like opera. If he liked certain foods—to this day, he can't understand why I don't eat tomatoes. It's a struggle for him, and it's always been a struggle for him, whereas my mother was so much more open. I would say that she actually preferred it if her children were a little different and taught her different things and took her to different places and gave her a different point of view and a different outlook.

I think it served her well, as a college teacher working with adolescents. She would come home and often talk about children who were struggling with gender identity and would go during her office time. She said that about half her office time was actually talking about accounting, and the rest of the time, she was talking to kids whose parents weren't supporting them—weren't supporting them for who they are, weren't supporting them in terms of the choice of their profession, weren't supporting them in terms of even what recreational activities they wanted to play. I think that it made her a better parent, when she started to be a teacher and started to work with others.

I like to mention Israel often in the Legislature. My time is running out. But Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has a gay pride parade, and I want to remind everybody about that today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think we can all agree that you don't get to be part of a debate like this very often in this House, and it's clearly a very special Thursday for us.

I'm reminded of a quote from June Callwood. She said, "Once you witness an injustice, you are no longer an observer but a participant," unless you fix it. What a privilege it is to be in this House today and honour the life of Leelah Alcorn, to honour her courage and to honour the fact that she threw out a challenge to all of us to fix this. We have the privilege to do that in this House today, and I want to thank the member from Parkdale-High Park for bringing forward this bill.

I want to read very quickly from an op-ed from Brent Hawkes, who joins us here in the Legislature today, because I think that he encapsulates some of the issues that we've been talking about.

He says: "Unfortunately, we have consistently seen opposition to human rights and protections for LGBTQ people coming from the radical religious right. Clearly, LGBTQ people, youth in particular, face discrimination and abuse in our society. The radical religious right does not speak for all people of faith; as a progressive Christian, I am called to seek justice for all people, especially LGBTQ youth. Religious oppression is still

oppression, and purported religious motivation can never be used to trump human rights.”

I think those are very powerful words, so I want to thank you for that.

“Efforts to ‘cure homosexuality’ have been heavily criticized for decades and were declared unethical by” multiple organizations. “Treatment methods aimed at correcting gender non-conformity or preventing transsexuality are beginning to inspire similar levels of outrage”—as they should, and that is partly why we are here today.

I want to say a special thank you to the gay-straight alliances and the students in Waterloo region who collected petitions. They get it. Often, youth are so much further ahead of us; sometimes we’re catching up. They collected signatures, and they knew, fundamentally, that other people don’t get the right to define us, and, obviously, they shouldn’t receive OHIP for that.

Today, this bill will close that door, close that loophole. That needs to happen. That’s why this legislation needs to pass with our full support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all for your comments. I now return to the member from Parkdale–High Park: two minutes for your response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first want to thank the Premier for being here and for speaking. I want to thank the future leader of the official opposition for speaking. I want to thank the leader of the third party, the Minister of the Environment, and the members for London West, Thornhill, Nepean–Carleton and Kitchener–Waterloo for speaking—I hope I haven’t left anybody out.

This is Holy Week. This is Maundy Thursday. I can’t think of a more holy moment that I’ve witnessed in this place. It’s wonderful when all parties can come together and speak with one voice about an injustice.

I want to hearken back to the Premier’s words. I think I heard her say “in principle.” I hope what she meant was that this bill will not only pass second reading but will go to committee, will get through committee and will come back and be passed into law. I hope that’s what she meant.

We are the province that put in place Toby’s Law, and that was an all-party effort too. We set the gold standard with Toby’s Law. I don’t want to see that gold tarnish. I think we should move ahead. We should show the world just what it looks like to be an inclusive and diverse society, and we can. We can do that today, and we can continue to do that. I’d like to see this bill become law by this Pride—and that’s in June—so there’s a time limit on it. That’s what got Toby’s Law going too.

What are we talking about? Two things. Banning this practice. Why is it necessary to ban the practice? Because children cannot complain to professional bodies. They need us to act. It’s for our children. It needs to be banned outright—end of story. That’s number one—for 18 and under. Number two, it needs to be delisted. We shouldn’t be paying for this anymore.

We need to act. For Leelah Alcorn; for every child who has died, in their memory; for their families; for all who love everyone; and, of course, for our own sakes, let’s celebrate this holy moment by making it real.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We’ll take the vote on this item at the end of private members’ business.

MAGNA CARTA DAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE JOUR DE LA GRANDE CHARTE

Mrs. Munro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day / Projet de loi 23, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Grande Charte.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member for York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m excited today to debate my private member’s bill, Bill 23, the Magna Carta Day Act, which proclaims June 15 each year as Magna Carta Day.

Magna Carta is a revolutionary document that influenced the English system of common law and was a precursor in the development of England’s and Canada’s constitutional monarchy. Living in Canada, it is easy to take our rights for granted. We are all blessed to live in a safe, peaceful, lawful country. However, it is important to remember the history of these rights and to remember those who do not enjoy the same freedoms as we do today.

On June 15, 1215, King John affixed his seal to Magna Carta. This placed limits on the monarch’s power to overrule the law and protected the rights of ordinary people. The document introduced key principles that hold true in democratic societies today: equal justice for everyone, freedom from unlawful detention, the right to a trial by jury, and rights for women.

However, to fully understand Magna Carta, we have to look at the time period in which it was signed and the underlying conditions that necessitated its creation. One of the pre-emptive conditions for the signing of Magna Carta was a weak economy.

1450

King John had lost the Battle of Bouvines. In order to reclaim territory that was lost in the battle, he needed large sums of money for his campaigns to reclaim Normandy. For this reason he was forced to maximize all possible sources of income. He increased and created every tax he could think of.

King John levied estate payments—those would be the 13th-century version of property taxes—11 times in his 17 years as king. He demanded higher taxes on inherited property, sometimes charging enormous sums beyond the barons’ ability to pay. He increased taxes on widows who wished to remain single. He also created an income tax as well as an import-export tax.

Increasing taxes and creating new taxes: Apparently not much changes in 800 years.

With his high taxes, King John added insult to injury. At the start of John's reign, there had been a sudden change in prices and inflation due to bad harvests and high demand for food. As well, there was a shortage of silver coinage as King John had been hoarding and using the currency for military purposes. These economic factors plus the increased taxes clearly did not help John's popularity.

No wonder the barons revolted. They wanted to avoid a civil war where the barons were divided against each other. With economic hardship and fewer rights, the barons eventually felt that they had no choice but to fight their own monarch and take control of the situation. They didn't like that reality, so they took control as peacefully as they could and they changed it with Magna Carta.

As parliamentarians we have a duty to uphold the traditional values that Magna Carta laid out 800 years ago. Although the Magna Carta placed specific limits on the power of the monarch, we must remember that, although elected by the citizens, we, as lawmakers, are also not above the law. When members of the government forget this—that all laws apply to us as well—voters become disengaged, sceptical, cynical and, indeed, apathetic.

The law demands respect. It is legal as civic leaders to change the law but illegal to break the law. As the Magna Carta declares, nobody is above the law, not even the king.

I believe that my bill, the Magna Carta Day Act, would serve to remind us every year in this Legislature that we are the keepers of democracy, that our actions do have consequences and that our words have weight.

It is important for Magna Carta to be honoured and remembered as a document that changed the course of history. The fundamental traditions of equality and freedom that characterize our democratic society—particularly that nobody, not even the crown, is above the law—originated in this important document.

I would like to congratulate some outstanding Ontarians for their work on educating Canadians about the Magna Carta, specifically Len and Suzy Rodness of Magna Carta Canada, and Dr. Carolyn Harris. Suzy Rodness and Dr. Carolyn Harris are here in the gallery today. I'd ask all to please welcome them to the gallery for their leadership. They are here today to observe this debate. I certainly welcome you to Queen's Park.

In recognition of the 800th anniversary, Magna Carta Canada has organized a tour of a copy of the Magna Carta, with stops in Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Edmonton. Making this historic document available to the Canadian public is a commendable task which I know has required years of work to coordinate.

I encourage all educators in the province to discuss the Magna Carta with their students so that the next generation understands the history of their freedoms and the importance of equality. I've received support from several educational and historical associations and I want

to thank them for their support, and look forward to passing Bill 23, as well as the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, with all of you.

I should also just point out, while we're looking at 800 years ago and the influence that we have in what happens to us today, that this is also the 600th anniversary of the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms. We have the privilege, as members here, to stand steeped in this kind of tradition and, obviously, the obligation to make sure that generations to come will appreciate how important these foundations are to the quality of life we enjoy here in this country and, quite frankly, many other countries of the world that are the inheritors of the principles of the Magna Carta.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, the Magna Carta is part of Canada's cultural and political heritage. It laid the foundation for the common-law legal system and was a direct influence on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is a document wrapped in story, legend and not just a few myths.

The appeal of the Magna Carta lies not in its specific details, many of which have lost relevance with the passage of time. No, it lies in its unshackled defence and declaration of the rule of law.

There are two general narratives about the Magna Carta, narratives that have played out over the last 800 years. The first is that of the establishment. It praises gradual reform, the slow extension of liberties and the gradual encroachment of the citizenry upon the sovereign power of the king. It tells of noble barons who fought the good fight in defence of English liberty against the cruel and capricious tyrant King John.

There is some truth in this. The rights won by the nobility in the Magna Carta paved the way for the parliamentary system, were eventually extended to all persons, not just free men, and in the 17th century were invoked to check Charles I's attempt to establish an absolute monarchy.

But there is a darker side to the story too. The nobility were oppressed by the king, but they were the oppressors of the whole English society. The serfs and peasants who lived under the nobility's arbitrary power received little from the Magna Carta, initially, at least, for the Magna Carta was, in its day, a charter of the 1%. To the oppressed 99% of English society, the nobles said, "Liberty for me, but not for thee."

That brings me to the second story of the Magna Carta. In this story, the Magna Carta has inspired the truly oppressed around the world. For eight centuries, the Magna Carta has fired the hearts and minds of those who seek justice in the face of tyranny and exploitation. The oppressed of the world have taken the Magna Carta as a totem in their demands for equality before the law, trial by their peers, immunity from illegal imprisonment and taxation only by the consent of the citizenry.

During the English Civil War, the Levellers drew on the Magna Carta's promise of equality before the law as

the grounds for an equal, classless society. It inspired the American revolutionaries and abolitionists alike. It influenced the Chartist movement in 19th-century England, which sought one man/one vote, no property qualification and the secret ballot.

Nelson Mandela cited the Magna Carta in his defence at the Rivonia trial. He lived in an unjust society under a tyrannical government that denied the rule of law by denying the equality of the people it was meant to serve. Apartheid in South Africa denied the promises of the Magna Carta.

And in the 21st century, when governments defend unlawful detention in the name of security, the writ of habeas corpus is the means by which the promises of the Magna Carta must be fulfilled.

Human rights are still being denied and trampled on in many corners of our world. We in Ontario and Canada cannot claim an unblemished record. For as long as governments act above the law, act arbitrarily and deny justice for their peoples, the Magna Carta will retain its significance. We in the House are tasked with drafting the law, the government across the floor is tasked with executing the law, but none of us here are above that law. We are its servants. Governments must be subject to the law, and true democracy cannot exist without respect, indeed reverence, for the rule of law. That is why we call for the highest standards in this House and in this province.

However, the rule of law is nothing if those of low or middle-class incomes cannot afford to access the courts.

1500

I praise the extra funding to Legal Aid Ontario, but much more is needed before all applicants are truly equal before the law.

Money and status buy power and influence—we cannot deny that. Our democracy is strong enough to prevent them from buying guilt or innocence outright, but money and status are the most potent players in those several shades of grey between.

I speak not only of inequality in criminal justice but in all forms of justice and fairness. The deferred wages of pensioners, such as those at Stelco, play second fiddle to the claims of banks and parent corporations; students eat at food banks while their tuition bankrolls executives; and one man at the top of a corporate pyramid has amassed unimaginable wealth by laying off 18,000 Canadian workers.

There is a different tier of justice for today's nobility—the rich, the powerful and the well-connected. We cannot forget that in its day the Magna Carta was a charter for the top 1%. It offered little solace to the un-free peasantry.

Less celebrated, but more important to them, was the Magna Carta's companion of 1217, the Charter of the Forest. This was a charter for the common man, the widow and the little guy. It allowed the common people to use the resources of the forests without being barred by the aristocracy, who liked to restrict access so they could enjoy the pleasures of the hunt. The common

people depended on the forests for their food, their furniture and their medicine. In its own way, the Charter of the Forest was a great cry against the privatization of our public assets—and how we could use a new Charter of the Forest today in Ontario.

The battle for the commons—for public ownership of our air, our water and our essential public services—never ends. There are those who would have us sell outright our birthright for a bauble, then rent them back at the cost of all our gold and silver. There are those who seek to privatize every resource necessary for human life and dignity. We in the NDP have always opposed that, for we believe and we know that true liberty and true equality before the law cannot exist where there is poverty, homelessness, discrimination and gross inequality of wealth. They cannot exist where access to education is unequal. They cannot exist when life and work are a struggle to survive.

So, Speaker, I celebrate the Magna Carta and I applaud this bill, but I know that the hard-won liberties of 1215 are not enough. I also celebrate the Charter of the Forest, which laid the seed of the idea that every human being had the right to the resources necessary to live. I celebrate all those who defied oppression and built on these two great charters to expand our rights and our opportunities here in Canada and abroad.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm honoured today to speak on this bill that recognizes the great importance the Magna Carta played in developing our modern justice and parliamentary systems. I thank the member for York-Simcoe for introducing it.

On June 15, 1215, King John of England was forced by his rebelling barons to grant royal assent to this wrinkled parchment immortalized as the Magna Carta or "Great Charter," and agreed to be bound by its 63 clauses. The Magna Carta gave rise to the rule of law affirming that no one is above the law, not even the King, and ensured people's freedom against arbitrary rule. It is also credited for securing trial by jury and the right of habeas corpus, protecting citizens from illegal imprisonment and guaranteeing the right of due process. It is also a step forward for women's rights, albeit a small one. It stated that a widow could not be forced to marry and give up her property.

This historic shift revealed that absolute power is a perilous illusion that breeds only unrest, regress and upheaval. It is the liberty of the individual collectively expressed that must be upheld.

The Magna Carta formed the foundation of the common law system and constitutional liberties. The principles of the Magna Carta are reflected in the charters of governments around the world, including the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, the American Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. For Canadians, it has informed key documents from the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which shaped the then-British colonies and their relations with First Nations, to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In its storied reinterpretation and evolution, the Magna Carta has charted the length and breadth of continued political thought relating to the expansion and assertion of human rights. Its ideals transcend cultures and ideologies as a powerful and lasting expression of freedom and justice.

The government of Ontario upholds these principles and continues to work towards extending human rights to marginalized groups. Our government understands that it has a duty to protect fundamental liberties and serve the best interests of all its citizens. It lies at the very core of what our government stands for, and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we will continue to operate this way for the rest of time, no matter what party is at the helm.

Although rarely invoked in courts today, and with most of its legal rights guarantees assured through other rights and charters, Magna Carta's symbolic and historical influence is unparalleled. As my colleague has noted in her bill, Magna Carta is a document that changed the course of history.

I have no doubt that it will be with great pride that Ontarians celebrate our high regard for human rights with dignity with Magna Carta's 800th anniversary this year on June 15.

I also encourage all Ontarians to visit the original Great Charter and its companion document, England's Charter of the Forest, while they're on display at the limited-time exhibits this year in Fort York National Historic Site in Toronto and the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa.

It is my pleasure to lend my wholehearted support to this bill, a bill that aims to institute a day of reflection on the history and importance of the rights and freedoms we enjoy today.

Monsieur le Président, c'est avec le plus grand plaisir que je donne mon appui à ce projet de loi ayant pour but l'institution d'une journée de réflexion sur l'histoire et l'importance des droits et libertés que nous apprécions tous tant aujourd'hui.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I am proud to stand in my place today and add my voice in strong support of this bill, the Magna Carta Day Act, put forward by my colleague from York-Simcoe.

I'd like to give more background on this topic by highlighting one of Canada's leading historians on the subject, Dr. Carolyn Harris, who is with us today in the members' gallery. Dr. Harris completed her PhD in European history at Queen's University in 2012. Her dissertation examined the English Civil Wars and the French Revolution, two instances of political change that drew upon ideas first codified in the Magna Carta in 1215.

Currently, she teaches history at the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies. She also provides frequent royal and historical commentary for the media, including CBC Radio and the CTV News Channel. Her writing on history and the monarchy has been published

in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *Smithsonian*, the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, and the *BBC News* magazine.

Dr. Harris's forthcoming book, *Magna Carta and Its Gifts to Canada: Democracy, Law and Human Rights*, discusses the history of Magna Carta and the profound impact of the Great Charter on modern Canadian institutions, including Canada's system of government and the common-law system.

Magna Carta is the first example of an English King accepting limits on his power imposed by his subjects, beginning the development of the modern constitutional monarchy that was formalized with the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

Magna Carta also informs the common-law system. The rights to due process, trial by peers and equality before the law were enshrined in Magna Carta. The charter contains early references to women's rights, confirming freedom from forced marriage for noble widows. Magna Carta has informed the development of human rights around the world, including the English Petition of Right from 1628, the American Constitution, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

With Dr. Harris's permission, here is an excerpt from her forthcoming book regarding Magna Carta and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

"The text of the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms reflects the influence of Magna Carta and the 1960 Canadian Bill of Rights. Section 9 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom from arbitrary detention or imprisonment, reflecting the lasting influence of clause 39 of the 1215 Magna Carta. Section 10 guarantees habeas corpus, a summons with the force of court order, proving lawful authority to detain a prisoner, a right that dates back to the Five Knights case that precipitated the Petition of Right in 1628, a document that reflects Sir Edward Coke's interpretation of Magna Carta. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms also affirms the primacy of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as Canada's first constitutional document, stating that the current charter does not abrogate from any of the rights or freedoms recognized by the proclamation."

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Here's the book's conclusion: "800 years after its creation, the ideals codified in Magna Carta have spread around the world, shaping politics and law in a global context. In Canada, Magna Carta has a unique history, influencing the relationship between the crown and First Nations from the Royal Proclamation of 1763, Canada's Confederation in 1867 and the modern Bill of Rights and Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Magna Carta shaped the development of common law in English Canada and continues to be cited in judicial proceedings. Canada's constitutional monarchy reflects the precedents set by Magna Carta, the Petition of Right and the British Bill of Rights. For 800 years, Magna Carta has given its gifts to

Canada and the world and will continue to do so for centuries to come.”

I want to thank Dr. Harris for being the careful and charismatic historian that she is, and, most importantly, for her support of this important bill to recognize the 800th anniversary of this very consequential document.

Mr. Speaker, there was still snow on the ground—hopefully by today the snow is gone—and I was out on the front lawn for a ceremony marking Magna Carta Day, and I met Carolyn Harris in person. She was there, as was the member from York–Simcoe. There’s an actual society for recognizing the importance of Magna Carta, and many teachers and historians were there to commemorate this important event.

I think that it’s important for us to know our history, because if we don’t know our history we don’t know where we came from, and we certainly won’t be able to have proper vision into where we’re going.

I think that we have a lot to commemorate here in this Legislature—not just our history, but many important events, many important cultures that we recognized yesterday. I was at the event for Sikh Heritage Month. The fun part of what we do here is to look back and look in the future and debate bills and offer our opinions.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I want to thank the member from York–Simcoe for all of her efforts, not just in commemorating the Magna Carta, but in mentoring me a little bit here since I arrived a little over a year ago and teaching me the ropes. I really want to thank her, and I want to wish her and her family a happy Easter, as I wish everybody else here in the Legislature happy Easter, happy Passover, chag sameach—I have to keep spelling it for the person who’s writing it; maybe she kept my notes from previously.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I’m obviously going to vote for the bill, but I’m going to come at it a little bit differently.

This is a question of a family squabble; that’s where the Magna Carta actually comes from. King Henry II had a number of children who were warring with him in order to steal the crown from their own father. They had a mother who was assisting at the time, who was quite helpful. What was her name again? How can we forget that queen? She’s in everybody’s memory, but it escapes me. What is it?

Interjection: Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Eleanor of Aquitaine and her three sons fought against the father in order to arrest the crown.

The one brother who could have gotten the crown decided, “To heck with it. I don’t want to fight about this anymore,” and decided to go out on the Crusades.

The other brother, who ended up becoming the king—King Richard Coeur de Lion, as they called him—became king of England and spent very little time in England. He spent most of his time in the Middle East, fighting in the wars of the time put on by the Pope when it came to the—

Interjection: The Crusades.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —the Crusades. Exactly. Thank you for the prompts. I really appreciate that.

They ended up with King John, who should have never been king—because King Richard was killed when he got back to France. He was besieging a castle somewhere in northern France and ended up receiving an arrow at a point where it essentially killed him, and King John became king. He was a truly bad king. This is what this is all about: They had a truly bad monarch who decided that he was just going to do what he wanted, and to heck with everybody else.

What happened? The top 1% revolted. This is the point that I want to make: It was the top 1% who revolted. Unlike today, when the bottom 99% are revolting, back then it was the top 1%. It was those with the power, the very top echelon of British society back then—which was really a French society, because those kings at that time were French kings. We forget that the Normans who invaded in 1066 were a line of francophone Normans who went into England. I always tease that the reason they went was that they wanted to bring the sauce, in order to undo all the bad food they had in England at the time. But nonetheless—I’m not going to have enough time here—it was a revolt of the top 1%.

King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta, which is essentially what everybody here described, which was a reining in of the power of the King to be able to tax the nobles in the way that the King was doing, to keep it very simple.

What’s interesting about this history is that the moment after he signed the Magna Carta, what did he do? He tried to renege. Essentially, it took the Pope at that time to put power and pressure on the King. The Pope excommunicated King John, and King John found himself in a position where he had no allies to defend himself against the warring barons in England, the warring barons in Aquitaine and in Normandy, and, certainly, the King of France at the time, Louis.

Here is a little bit of history that nobody realizes: This is the time that we had a king who was actually a French king from France who became the King of England after the death of King John, because the Normans of the day decided they wanted no more of the lineage of King John, so they decided to take a chance on King Louis. I forget what his term was; I don’t remember what number of Louis he was, but he was King Louis nonetheless. He became the King of England for a little less than a year. After a while, the Normans figured out, “My God, this guy is just as bad as John, so let’s get rid of King Louis.” They decided to undo King Louis, because he had not been crowned. There was an issue in regard to how all of that happened. So they ended up recognizing who ended up becoming Henry III, I believe, who was the son of King John who became the King.

From that time forward, most kings have accepted the idea of Magna Carta. What’s interesting is, some of the kings that we remember as being the better ones actually took the heart of Magna Carta and brought it further and

decided, "You know what? If I'm going to rule, I just can't rule as a complete monarch without any respect for the public." They started to understand, as a monarchy, that they had to move in a different direction.

I think what's truly remarkable about the British monarchy is that 1,000-plus years later, you still have a monarchy in England. Why? Because the Queen and her forebears were smart enough to realize that the people wanted to be able to get ascendancy when it came to the decision-making of day-to-day things that affected us and our nations.

If you look at the history of the British monarchy, its resilience has been, I think, a couple of things. One is their recognition that at one point, even though it took a civil war with King Charles—which is a whole other issue—the kings and the queens—because Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary, Queen Anne and others understood that you had to relent to a certain degree if you wanted to hold on to the monarchy and keep the country going in the direction that they wanted it to go.

But the other thing is, England is one of these countries that, every now and then, when they most needed it, had some of the best generals and leaders leading in a time of peril. We think of Wellington; we think even of Cromwell—which was interesting, because Cromwell had his own effect on English history—and we certainly think of people like Winston Churchill. We look at Lloyd George and we look at Asquith in regard to what they did for the modern democracy that we have today, that we actually practise here in Canada.

Certainly, we're going to support the bill. But I'll tell you, one of the most fascinating reads you'll ever do is a read of European history and the monarchies of Europe in regard to how we have gone so far in so long a time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I am very pleased to participate in this debate for a few minutes, and I am very happy that the member has brought this bill forward.

I've been sitting through the debate, and it feels like my days back when I was an undergraduate. I studied history, and I remember studying at length the Magna Carta. I remember having to write a paper on the Magna Carta. It all sort of rushed back and reminded me of the seminar that I sat in at university. So thank you very much, Professor Harris, for briefing some of the members here on the work that you're doing, and congratulations on the work that you're doing.

1520

Then I listened to the member for Thornhill. You sounded like a history professor yourself, in your comments—and the same for the member for James Bay.

In fact, I was so impressed and taken with the study of medieval history, especially medieval English and French history, that I decided I was going to become a historian. I finished my undergraduate, and that summer, I went to England. The very first place I went was to view a copy of the Magna Carta.

I grew up in Waterloo, and I hadn't been anywhere. I'd been to Toronto a few times. This overwhelming

feeling that I had, standing in England in front of this iconic document, the Magna Carta—I can't tell you what that did to me. So I decided I was going to become a historian.

Anyway, my mother found out about it, and she made me become a lawyer. It's a long story—

Ms. Soo Wong: It's always the mother.

Hon. David Zimmer: There's always a mother behind—

Mrs. Gila Martow: Conversion therapy.

Hon. David Zimmer: In a sense, yes.

But let me just say something about the Magna Carta, because we've heard some very high-level comments about it. To put the Magna Carta in its simplest basis, there was a king, King John, who ruled as an absolute monarch. His whim was law; his whim was the decision of the land. He did what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it, and basically, everybody had to fall in line.

Not surprisingly, that generated a reaction among many other people in England at the time. It was led by a group of barons who essentially said to King John, "Look, you can be the king, but there are certain limits on what you can do." The Magna Carta set out, essentially, a number of those limits, and we've heard reference to those limits.

The other important thing the Magna Carta essentially said was that these decisions that the king, to date, had made on his own, without reference to the people that he was supposedly governing—that he should take into consideration their views, their wishes, and their thoughts. That is the germinal seed of our democracy.

The member for Hamilton referred to the Charter of the Forest, which was a couple of years later. The Magna Carta gave people in England a thirst or an appetite for making further inroads into King John's authority. The first one that occurred, as the member for Hamilton has said, was the Charter of the Forest, which added a number of additional rights that the king had to consider, on behalf of the people, when he made decisions. So our last 800 years of history have been a series of building blocks built on the Magna Carta.

The member for Thornhill referenced the English Revolution in the 17th century, and then the French Revolution in the 18th century. Both of those great revolutions were reactions against royal authority. They built on those seminal ideas set out in the Magna Carta. Then in the American Revolution, they built on those ideas in the Magna Carta.

In fact, the democracy that we enjoy today, members in this Legislature, federal members in Ottawa, in all of the western democracies and democracies developing around the world in other countries—if you look at it closely, the concept, the seminal idea, moves back and back and back to the Magna Carta. It said that nobody can run the country on their own; consult and interact with the good citizens of the country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise today as we debate part of Ontario's history and, certainly, the

beginning of Canadians' political history, and of course, the beginning of the Commonwealth and British history as it pertains to our democracy that we practise today.

When we talk about the Great Charter, or the Magna Carta, we see the very foundation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that we have here today, but this is about 600 years older than that.

I'm really pleased to be speaking on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to support Julia Munro, the member from York-Simcoe, on this piece of legislation, which I believe is important for us to recognize, as most of the Commonwealth nations around the world are doing at this particular time, given the importance of this document in the fundamental ways we govern ourselves.

It is my understanding, for example, that other nations right across the world will be celebrating the 800th anniversary in June 2015. I think it's incumbent upon all of us as legislators to support this resolution and this bill because it speaks to the values that we hold dear and that we support.

The member from York-Simcoe, I might add, has been a long-serving member of this assembly. I believe she is the longest-serving female MPP that we have here, so I think it is only appropriate that she puts forward this historic and landmark legislation and a proclamation that will ensure and enshrine a Magna Carta Day.

We all know that the Magna Carta, the Great Charter, has worldwide significance. It is celebrated by most of the English-speaking world. It certainly is supported by many who support democracies.

The Magna Carta, as the other speakers have said, was originated to put limits on the king's powers, particularly as they pertained to spending and taxation. Although today we see it's a very different time than it was 800 years ago, we still place limits on our elected government. We make sure that those residents that we have across the province have a say in their democracy and the values that we debate here in the Ontario Legislature. We still debate taxation. In fact, the very foundation of the way we engage in bills here in this assembly is directly derived from that period in time.

In the short period that I do have to speak to this—only a few more minutes—I wanted to talk about a project that is being undertaken by two individuals, two journalists who are well known to this assembly: Brigitte Pellerin, who has, from time to time, written for the *Ottawa Citizen*, as well as her husband, John Robson, who is a contributor on the former *Sun News* and also on CFRA. They have crowd-sourced in order to put forward a documentary called *Magna Carta*—and its history here in Canada, talking about how it has shaped our democracy and its very foundations.

I'd like to read a little bit about that in the small time that I have here, Speaker, if you'll indulge me. They say on their website: "The documentary will explain the origins of our government: How control of the purse by the Commons, freedom of speech in Parliament, the specific, accessible legal remedies that protect ordinary people from arbitrary arrest and the seizure of their

property were all affirmed in Magna Carta, and preserved over succeeding centuries by men and women clear on their rights and brave in their defence."

A few weeks ago in this chamber we talked about a man named Ernest Côté. He was fundamental, I believe, in the shaping of our history after World War II, the Second World War. He fought at Vimy. Vimy Ridge is perhaps the greatest-known military success that we've ever had as Canadians, and we still celebrate that. Ernest Côté had been in charge of operations.

I spoke about it here in the assembly. You will recall that the Premier spoke, as well as the leader of the third party. We talked about the rights and freedoms that we have.

What was important: Not only did we talk about the rights and freedoms that they protected for us, we talked about the rights and freedoms that Ernest Côté and his generation were able to retain.

It's appropriate that my colleague from Oxford sits beside me at this moment while we talk about that part in our history and in world history. It is appropriate because when he was growing up in Holland he lost his rights, the rights that are enshrined in documents like the Great Charter, Magna Carta, the rights that are enshrined in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They are the very freedoms that the colleague who sits beside me to my right lost when he was a child.

1530

So when we think that this is just a proclamation and another one of those fluff bills, I can say here today that that couldn't be any further from the truth. We're talking here today about proclaiming a day that is recognized worldwide, that celebrates 800 years of freedom and rights for people in democracies. I think it's important that we do that today. I commend the member from York-Simcoe, and I thank the Speaker for his indulgence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm glad to speak to this bill today. I know my middle daughter would be delighted to see me speaking to this bill, because this was her area of specialty when she was in university. I'm sure, no doubt, that she will be reviewing this tape and I will get corrections immediately upon sitting down, but I will do my best. Michelle, if you're listening, I will do my best.

I just wanted to say that this is a bill that holds significance for our philosophy of law and the government which I'm proud to be part of. I wanted to thank the member from York-Simcoe for bringing this bill forward.

The British Empire lasted more than 300 years and spanned the globe. During this time, Magna Carta Libertatum was used to justify global ambition, and by indigenous people to demand liberty and justice. So I'm grateful for the opportunity it presents us to take a look at our modern government and its history, our style of government, and our relationships with constituents, the law and the crown.

As a matter for our Constitution in Canada, the remnants of Magna Carta have been replaced. What it

lent to our province is now well provisioned for by laws by Ontarians for Ontarians. It does not mean, however, that the evolution of modern democracy does not owe itself to the foundation laid by this seminal document, nor that its accession by King John of England in 1215 is any less significant.

Providing Ontarians with opportunities to commemorate and reflect on how we got to where we are today is vital to the future of our democracy. My hope would be that this act would provide such an occasion.

As I mentioned, I also believe that discussing this bill gives us an opportunity to look more closely at our modern government, how we elect it and maintain it, and how we view our relationship with the crown. As times change and systems of government evolve, and as other democracies evaluate the status of their constitutional monarchies, so too should Canada and Ontario. Nine provinces and three territories are federated under a common Constitution, with another province thoroughly involved as a nation within a nation, and the world looks to us as an example of success.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all for your comments. I now return to the member for York—Simcoe: two minutes for your reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to thank the members for Newmarket—Aurora, Thornhill, Kingston and the Islands, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Willowdale, Timmins—James Bay and Nepean—Carleton.

In trying to bring together in a very brief moment the essence of today's debate, I think there are three things that I would like to leave viewers with.

The first is that it's clear, from the information that has been given to us today, that we have an obligation to continue to defend the principles of Magna Carta, because when you look at those principles, they are the foundations of what we have today with charters of rights and freedoms and various constitutions that have been named, fundamental justice things like habeas corpus and the role of the rule of law.

So today we want to be able to honour that origin in recognizing Magna Carta Day—defending the principles of Magna Carta and recognizing the value of the various pieces of legislation that owe their essence to Magna Carta.

The third thing is the importance of recognizing how important it is to pass on to future generations so that people have an understanding of the manner in which these things developed. The most important thing about their development is that it was peaceful. When you look at the revolutions that took place, particularly in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, they demonstrated an inability to come to the same place as King John brought us 800 years ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote at the end of private members' business.

POST-STROKE RECOVERY SERVICES

Ms. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should take

immediate steps to find the necessary in-year savings to extend post-stroke recovery services to those aged 20 through 64 years of age, who, unless covered by private insurance, cannot receive, but still require, rehabilitation services, which, if provided, not only reduce reliance and dependency upon Ontario's health care system but help those patients recover more quickly and return to the workforce.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member for Whitby—Oshawa.

Ms. Christine Elliott: At the outside, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to apologize to you, my fellow members and those people listening: I've got more than a little bit of laryngitis today. So I do apologize, and I hope you'll bear with me.

I am very grateful to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to this very important issue, critical for so many individuals and families who, as we speak, are waiting for expanded post-stroke recovery services as soon as we're able to deliver them. I must say that I'm very pleased to be joined today by a resident of Durham region, Mr. Jim McEwen, who has been an advocate for post-stroke recovery services, and Mrs. Lorraine McEwen. Thank you so much for being here.

Since I was first elected as an MPP, I have maintained that good governance is defined by a government's ability to manage the public purse wisely, so that we can invest in programs and services that make a positive difference in the lives of all Ontarians. Good fiscal policy enables good social policy. Fair and equal access is at the core of what it means to be a Canadian. It's at the core of what it means to live in Ontario.

As critic for health care and long-term care for the Ontario PC Party, these are the principles for which I've long fought, and it's these principles that drove me today to introduce this motion, which would compel the government of Ontario to take immediate steps to find the in-year savings necessary to expand post-stroke recovery services to people between the ages of 20 and 64 who have suffered a stroke.

I have already introduced Mr. McEwen, but I'd like to say that Jim has been a dedicated community leader. He fights not only for his family, but for many thousands of families across the province of Ontario. It's through people like Mr. McEwen that we can better inform ourselves of this issue, to make good and effective public policy.

Mr. McEwen himself suffered a stroke in 2010. As he, or close to 90,000 other post-stroke patients in Ontario, can tell you, the recovery process following a stroke is challenging and can extend for many years. Currently, unless covered by private insurance, these post-stroke patients cannot receive the essential rehabilitation services needed for recovery. Post-stroke patients have found that once they are discharged from hospital, our publicly funded health care system provides only a fraction of the rehabilitation services they need. After that, Mr. Speaker, patients are simply on their own.

While there are many individual programs and institutions that provide exceptional post-stroke coverage, the coverage of these programs is inconsistent across the province. This has resulted in far too many patients facing financial hardship once they are required to pay for their substantial rehabilitation costs out of pocket.

To understand this process, it would be helpful to outline the nature of strokes and how they affect patients and their families. Most commonly, post-stroke patients will experience one or a combination of motor, sensory, cognitive or communication deficits. Patients will spend many hours relearning how to walk, how to speak or how to perform everyday tasks that most of us take for granted. Again, it is important to note that each patient's recovery path will be different, depending on the severity of their stroke and the post-stroke effects they experience. This perhaps explains the challenges we face when trying to build an integrated and effective stroke management system. The reality is that the one-size-fits-all approach certainly does not fit in this case. If we try to impose one, patients with complex health challenges will inevitably be left behind.

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Each day that the government continues to delay funding these services means that these survivors are kept waiting. The good news is that more and more research has found that frequent and consistent post-stroke community-based rehabilitation, like speech language pathology, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, can significantly enhance the health and mobility of patients.

I encourage everyone here to review the Canadian Institute for Health Information report entitled *Pathways of Care for People with Stroke in Ontario* to better understand the complex nature of stroke management. In this report, the institute attempts to map the most common pathways through the health care apparatus that stroke patients experience. A brief examination of stroke patient flow will help to clearly articulate the gap in service that I hope to address with this motion.

Typically at the onset of a stroke, depending on the severity, a patient will arrive at a hospital through the emergency department, where they will receive an assessment, diagnosis and stroke management services. Acute in-patient management is generally necessary to get someone through the worst of the stroke and into stable condition. From there, a patient will be provided with in-patient rehabilitation services for varying lengths of time. After that, a patient can either be discharged either to a long-term-care facility, complex continuing care programs, palliative care or, in the case of 55% of stroke patients, be discharged home.

It is patients who are discharged home who face the least consistent, least integrated and least accessible rehabilitation services. The Ontario Stroke Network estimates that current out-patient rehabilitation resources are sufficient to meet the needs of only 50% of patients being discharged home from in-patient rehabilitation. This was certainly the case following Mr. McEwen's

stroke. After only 12 therapy treatments following his discharge from hospital, he more or less had to pay for the treatment he continues to need.

Physiotherapy is one of the most crucial treatments for post-stroke recovery. However, two years ago the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care reformed the funding formula for physiotherapy services. The updated criteria, because they're not specific to stroke recovery, mean that stroke patients from the ages of 20 to 64 have restricted access to rehabilitation services immediately upon discharge from hospital. Essentially, while the criteria may suit knee surgery recovery well, they do not reflect the long-term nature of stroke recovery.

Under this funding model, OHIP covers a maximum of \$318 for physiotherapy services for individuals between the ages of 19 and 65, provided they have experienced a health event that requires an overnight hospital stay. In many cases, hundreds of rehab sessions are needed for post-stroke recovery, yet publicly funded services are capped at a much lower level.

For example, consider the case of Julie, a 28-year-old stroke patient from Ottawa. Specialists told her that she would require hundreds of rehabilitation sessions to regain the use of her right side. This rehab included speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Julie received coverage for 20 sessions of each type of therapy. She has since had to postpone her wedding because she and her family have to pay thousands of dollars per month to ensure she has access to the treatment she needs.

It is time for us as legislators to recognize that stroke rehabilitation is long-term in nature and it is unacceptable to expect post-stroke patients to drain retirement savings or sell their homes just to get the care they need.

Another aspect of this issue that requires some attention is the role a patient's age plays in the pursuit of post-stroke rehabilitation. We all know that strokes do not discriminate on the basis of age. Strokes can afflict teenagers, young adults, middle-aged individuals and seniors, yet the current model for rehabilitation services, particularly physiotherapy, does not reflect this reality and disadvantages non-senior and non-youth stroke patients. All of Ontario's post-stroke patients deserve access to essential recovery programs and services.

The Ontario Stroke Network estimated in the report *The Impact of Moving to Stroke Rehabilitation Best Practices in Ontario* that a reinvestment of \$11 million per year into out-patient and community-based care could provide expanded care for 1,706 additional stroke patients annually. This is a fair price to pay to ensure that all post-stroke patients in Ontario have access to the care they deserve.

I'd also like to note that this is even more than an issue of fairness for post-stroke patients in Ontario. Expanding post-stroke recovery services will lessen the burden on our health care system, which is under increasing pressure—pressure that will only escalate as our population ages.

It will also help our economy. In Canada, strokes cost the economy \$3.6 billion per year. Expanding these

services will help post-stroke patients recover faster so they can return to the workplace sooner. Businesses succeed when their employees are healthy and productive. If a patient recovers well enough, they can return to work. Otherwise, they'll continue to be out of work, and that puts additional strain on our economy.

I, for one, find it shameful that some people's experience with our health care system has left such a bad impression that they can't but feel that the system has forgotten about them once they leave the hospital. This is particularly troubling at a time when the government is trying, supposedly, to integrate more home and community-based care into the system. We need to do better, and I believe we can do better.

This motion is a common-sense solution to a growing problem. It will help expand and improve care. It will help contain costs. I'm glad to deliver this critical message to the government, a message that is both supported enthusiastically by the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Durham region Stroke Recovery Group. I urge all members to join with us to support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this motion and I want to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing it forward: so good job.

Sometimes patients who experience a stroke can have a full recovery or go on to live their life to its full capacity, but there are many who experience the serious, debilitating effects of a stroke.

Yes, we can do things in our lives that will reduce the risk of stroke, such as healthy eating and being physically active. The Heart and Stroke Foundation offers a useful risk assessment tool on their website that helps us review our lifestyle, assesses our risks and how we might reduce them. But there are no guarantees, especially as some causes are inherited.

According to the Ministry of Health, over 90,000 Ontarians live with the effects of a stroke. In fact, stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in Canada. The effects of a stroke can vary considerably, and the intent of this motion is to address those effects through rehabilitation services so that people can live as independently in life as possible after the fact.

Rehabilitation cannot reverse brain damage, but it can help relearn skills that were lost or learn new skills that can help accommodate for some lost abilities. With access to rehabilitation, patients can make remarkable recoveries, but unfortunately, outpatient post-stroke rehabilitation is not publicly funded. Yes, a small number of sessions are covered, but once they have been used, patients have to pay the costs themselves.

The Toronto Star reported in 2013 that some patients were paying more than \$1,000 a week for private therapy. Families are draining their retirement savings for these essential services. Others are simply doing without.

Let me take a few minutes to talk about a couple of the possible effects from a stroke. After a stroke, some

people might lose the use of one side of their body. They might lose the ability to use a hand, an arm or a leg. Perhaps the muscles in the face aren't working properly, causing speech to be slurred. It can mean losing sight in one eye or one side of both eyes, causing peripheral vision to be lost.

1550

If we are healthy, with full use of the various parts of our body, we tend to take it for granted in things that we do every day. If we lose the use of one hand, for example, life becomes a lot different. I can challenge anyone to stick one hand in their pocket just for a day to see how much longer and how much more difficult it is to button a shirt, type a memo or just peel a potato.

Consider for a minute the effect of losing peripheral vision to one side. Let us imagine a person who, when looking straight ahead, cannot see anything that is more than about five degrees off to one side, even though both eyes are wide open and looking straight ahead.

In the case of a person losing the use of a hand, others would likely notice pretty quickly and would probably take note and put it into consideration when interacting with that person. In the case of the person who lacks peripheral vision, however, it's not apparent to others, so they don't know how to compensate for it. Much of our communication is non-verbal—more than you might think. We show things to people. We point to something. We smile. We frown. We nod our head in agreement. We cringe in disgust. And we assume that if we are standing close to a person within what is a normal field of vision, we are understanding and interpreting those visual cues.

Non-response, or what we perceive to be an inappropriate response, would give us a completely different view of that person than the reality—their thoughts, their opinions or their personality. Imagine what it is like to go through life being misunderstood, false assumptions being made about you each and every day, and you have no idea that it's happening.

These are just a couple of examples, but generally, stroke can cause five types of disabilities: paralysis or problems controlling movement; sensory disturbances, including pain; problems using or understanding language; problems with thinking and memory; and emotional disturbances.

Rehabilitation can start within 24 to 48 hours of a stroke and sometimes it can be a lifelong process, yet there is precious little funding to cover it.

Just last year the Ontario Stroke Evaluation Report by Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences said that there is an ongoing need for rehab system change such as access to hospital-based outpatient rehabilitation services in addition to CCAC.

And: "More work is needed to transition patients from the acute care setting into the appropriate rehabilitation setting.... As in previous years, deficiencies in community-based rehabilitation and care remain...."

They also reported that stroke rehabilitation varied widely across the LHINs. A statement justifies the Auditor General's remark. The previous year he said:

"There is a need for a provincially coordinated rehabilitation system."

And things are getting worse. Constituents have contacted my office because of outpatient therapy being cut at St. Peter's Hospital. They are told that they need to get therapy in the community, but often it simply doesn't exist, even if they did have the money to pay for it. That's the state of our health care in Ontario today: More and more hospital services are being cut.

Post-stroke recovery care should be universally accessible to all Ontarians who need it and they shouldn't have to rely on private insurance, personal savings or selling their home to pay for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to stand here today to speak to this motion. I would like to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing forward this very important discussion to the House and for facilitating this conversation, and congratulate her on her work as critic for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Our government is fully committed to health care in the province of Ontario. We are dedicated to putting patients first and improving the quality of care for every Ontarian all across the province. This is reflected in every decision that we make. This is further exemplified in the next phase of our plan Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care, which we introduced in February of this year and which clearly states our commitment to responsible, efficient health care.

I know about this commitment to health care first-hand, as just this week it was announced that Joseph Brant Hospital, in my riding of Burlington, will be expanding with a virtually brand new hospital built by 2018, including the refurbishment of existing facilities now undergoing renovations.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I were on hand on Monday for the ground-breaking of this state-of-the-art facility, one which will lead to a higher quality of patient care in Burlington.

It is investments like this one that prove that our government is making important investments in health care right across our province.

Stroke rehabilitation services and care are as important to our government as all other health care services, and, as such, we are committed to ensuring equitable access for all Ontarians. In fact, as the minister outlined in the House earlier today during question period, in response to the honourable member across, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is seized with this issue and is ensuring that patients are able to access services within their own communities.

Physiotherapy initiatives are going forward which will go a long way to reaching this goal. In fact, with the changes our government is introducing, the number of publicly funded physiotherapy clinics will double. This will provide access to care for more than 200,000 additional seniors, including high-quality physiotherapy,

exercise and fall-prevention classes. Of course, this is of critical importance in my riding of Burlington, where I hear support for our work in this regard, and because almost one in five residents in my riding is a senior.

CCACs are also helping to address the problem. As you know, health care in Ontario is about a patient-centred focus. CCACs are helping to ensure that patients are able to stay in their homes during their recovery periods, reducing the toll on hospitals and saving taxpayers' dollars simultaneously.

More than 60,000 additional seniors and community clients have access to in-home physiotherapy services, thanks to CCACs, and 60,000 more Ontarians will have access by the end of 2015. There will be no limits set on the number of physiotherapy sessions available to patients, and they will continue to receive as many sessions as determined by their provider.

As I pointed out earlier—and I think it is important to address and say—any change and increase in services also comes with a change or increase in associated costs. As with any such increase in cost, the funding for these initiatives has to come from somewhere. I look forward to hearing more about suggestions and solutions from the member opposite as how to do so. Revenue needs to be generated in order to pay for services, and I would therefore make the observation that cutting \$1 billion through corporate tax cuts does just the opposite.

As always, governing requires difficult choices. The unfortunate truth is that you cannot have it both ways. One cannot promise to cut billions in health care funding and government revenue while also seeking to increase spending in the same area. This motion asks for an increase in health care spending while offering very little in terms of corresponding specifics as to how it will be funded.

While I support this motion, I would respectfully suggest that the practicalities of it need to be addressed. I would ask all members in the House, as I mentioned earlier, to join my support for this motion—but again, the practicalities, Speaker. You need to fill in the blanks a little bit here.

I would like to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for raising this issue here in the House, for having the conversation, because it's an important one. I look forward to the opportunity for further debate and discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome Mr. McEwen and Mrs. McEwen to hear us debate this important motion, this private member's bill.

We have all witnessed in our communities, possibly even in our families, the struggle that people go through when they've had a stroke. We all understand that when there is rehabilitation that is so likely to help people, we must, as a community, find a way to fund it.

We're seeing a province that's in debt. We're seeing a province that has wasted billions of dollars on moving gas plants, on eHealth. I don't have to go on and on with

all the wasted revenue. We're seeing a province that is investing \$2 billion in the Pan Am Games, yet we're also seeing a province that is promising to build hospitals at the same time, with no revenue to fund these hospitals, and cutting services from existing hospitals and existing avenues of patient care.

The member from Burlington just said that revenue has to be generated. I question that, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that brought in the health premium. Our residents are paying very high tax in Ontario. We don't need a government that looks for more revenue tools. We need a government that prioritizes its spending on what the citizens of the province want to see their hard-earned tax dollars go to.

As an optometrist, I had many patients who were stroke patients and had lost peripheral vision. They were unable to drive, even after they were rehabilitated and they were doing very well. If you'd met them and spoke to them and walked with them, you wouldn't have thought they had had a stroke. The fact is that they weren't able to drive, and oftentimes, that made work very difficult and family life very difficult.

1600

Just today, we spoke about eating healthy, about stopping smoking, about e-cigarettes. All of these contribute to stroke. It's important that we recognize what we can do, as legislators, not just to help people once they've had a stroke, but to diminish the likelihood of strokes.

We recall, when women were on very high doses of birth control pills, it was found that they were at a much greater risk of stroke—to the point where they were told not to take birth control pills, decades ago—if they were smokers.

We heard today about autism in the community, and what the community can do to help families who are experiencing the difficulties of having a family member with autism.

Two years ago, the government changed the funding criteria, and now we're seeing that people between the ages of 20 and 64 are not receiving the same coverage for stroke rehabilitation that people younger than 20 or older than 64 are receiving. That's discriminatory, Mr. Speaker. Why is this government assuming that, somehow, people between the ages of 20 and 64 have the funding to pay for it? Why is this government assuming that people somehow should know, before they turn 20, that maybe they should take out private health insurance? Why isn't this government having a public awareness campaign to tell people, "You know what? We're not going to fund you, so maybe take out private health insurance." Maybe those people shouldn't be paying the health premium. That money instead should go for private health coverage.

Why? Because they're playing this game that I could call misleading, or I'll even go so far as to say dishonest, which is, "We're providing full health coverage. You don't have to worry." But the fact is, they're not providing full health coverage, and that's really what the debate comes down to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, but we all know it's the truth—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to just withdraw and continue the debate on the bill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Withdrawn.

I would like to see the government focus on the priorities. People are paying their tax dollars, and they're paying such high taxes that they don't believe they also have to, on top of that, take out private health insurance. But I think many stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64, if you ask them—and I hope that members of the media will ask them—"What would you have done differently?", that's what they're going to say they would have done differently. They would have taken out better, private health insurance, because now they find themselves at their wits' end.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to speak to this motion on behalf of New Democrats, and we're pleased to support it.

Speaker, there are 15,000 people hospitalized each year because of strokes. The need for stroke rehab, as we've heard from the various people speaking to this, is needed today, not years from now.

There have been reports done, and clearly, without access to rehab, mildly disabled stroke patients will continue to be a major source of acute-care/alternate-level-of-care days and long-term-care admissions.

I heard, from the member from Burlington here, actually speaking to the official opposition, saying, "Well, you can't have it both ways. You need to come up with some ideas. How are we going to fund this?" I say: That's the government's job, Speaker. It's up to the government to find ways to pay for these very needed services for a large segment of our population.

The Liberals talk a good game about aging-at-home strategies. At the same time, they're not making any investments in long-term-care beds, with thousands across the province waiting to go into a long-term-care bed. There are long wait-lists in the community care sector. In my own riding alone, a couple of years ago, there were as many as 500 people on the wait-list for personal support work. They're not making any investments in outpatient treatment that is affordable to many of the people who suffer from strokes. But at the same time they're fast and furiously cutting acute care beds across this province, including in the riding of Niagara, where they propose to close five hospitals over the next few years, at least two of those hospitals with these beds that people with strokes are staying in while they're waiting to receive some kind of treatment.

At the same time, the government has wasted billions of dollars on Ornge, on cancelling gas plants, on P3s—all dollars that actually could have been used to provide this much-needed service.

In 2007, in my riding of Niagara, the Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre sent a proposal to the government asking to build a new space to house an additional 64 rehab restorative beds. The proposal spoke to an expansion and distribution of in-patient rehab beds as a means of providing capacity, configuration and programming to improve access of patient care, facilitate service integration and promote system performance across Niagara for these people who have had strokes who are in need of rehabilitation.

That was in 2007. In 2014, they sent the letters off again to the minister at the time, the Honourable Deb Matthews, to the Honourable Jim Bradley and to Donna Cripps, who is the CEO of the LHIN. They got a response on February 5, 2014, from Jim Bradley, the minister without portfolio: "While I'm very much aware that the number of requests received by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for capital projects of this kind is extensive, and the budgetary circumstances facing the provincial government will not permit the approval of all of these projects, I will continue to advocate" on your behalf "for this special project."

Well, they've been waiting—I guess that's eight years. They've raised a significant amount of money—I think \$10 million or \$11 million—for this cause. These beds are greatly needed in Niagara. In fact, I believe that the Niagara region has the fourth-largest seniors population in Canada—not in Ontario, but countrywide. The stats show that residents in the region display a higher average prevalence of chronic conditions requiring rehab services. Many of them have multiple complex health issues which require a longer period of time to address and resolve.

The Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre in my riding is a facility that specializes and excels in the provision of complex care, geriatrics, outpatient, in-patient and restorative services. What they've told me today was that unless they get approval for this 64-bed project that they've been asking for for eight years, they will not be able to provide any expanded post-stroke services in the Niagara region. Clearly, our acute care hospitals are not doing that either.

I'm thankful to have the opportunity. I'm thankful that this important motion has been brought forward today by the member from—

Ms. Christine Elliott: Whitby—Oshawa.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Whitby—Oshawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for introducing this important motion and for allowing me to speak to the Legislature on health care in our province. It's particularly important to me to be speaking on this as the parliamentary assistant to health and long-term care. I also want to make sure that I do welcome Mr. McEwen here today to the House. I want you to know that we are listening to what you have to say.

There's no question that post-stroke recovery services are vital for patients, and equity when it comes to those

services is extremely important. That's why I am proud to be supporting this motion.

However, I do want to point out a few things. I am proud of the health care system that we have built in this province. We understand that there is more work to do. However, the government of Ontario continues to be working hard to make improvement to the system to ensure that the quality of care remains high and that patients remain at the centre of every health care decision.

In fact, I recently visited two hospitals serving the residents in my riding.

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As the member from Burlington mentioned, I was there at the ground-breaking for the Joe Brant hospital. I was also recently touring the hospital in Oakville, the Oakville-Trafalgar hospital, which will be opening within the year and is a state-of-the-art facility.

As I'm sure the member opposite knows, in February 2015, Minister Hoskins introduced our Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. That plan is a commitment to transform our health care system. I think this is one of the most important initiatives under way right now in our province. This plan signifies a vital shift of focus in the health care system. We are moving away from a health care provider-focused system to a more patient-centred system. This is a response to the changing health care needs of the people in this province, and it's something that ensures we will be delivering better, more focused and more efficient care.

What this all means is that the member opposite, in my opinion, is late to this issue. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is already moving forward with the work necessary to ensure that all patients get access to stroke rehabilitation services in their own communities. So we have to ask ourselves: Why does the member from Whitby—Oshawa want to focus on this now? We're already working on delivering quality care. We're already working on improving the quality care that we're delivering, and I have to ask about the timing.

For example, in my riding of Halton there are several local community services, like Milton Stroke, Oakville Stokers and the Halton Stroke Fellowship, which provide social, physical and emotional services to individuals who have suffered a stroke and offer supports for their family members and care partners. There are also other supports through local hospitals.

Our government is committed and has been committed for some time to improving equitable access to high-quality stroke rehab care across the province. The previous government, however, was tearing down hospitals, firing nurses and doctors, forcing ERs to lock their doors and leaving one million people without a doctor. Think about that: The previous government cut funding to vital services, starved health care budgets and left our system teetering on the edge of ruin. In fact, my own daughter wasn't born in our local hospital in our riding. I actually had to go to another hospital outside of my riding in order to deliver her.

It looks like the opposition party would like to return to those dark days. In fact, the member from Whitby—

Oshawa stood on the front lawn of Queen's Park recently promising to cut billions in funding. The member opposite told reporters that her leadership platform included reducing government revenues by \$1 billion by cutting corporate taxes and saying, "I will lower Ontario's business tax rate to 10% lower over three years."

Mr. Speaker, I ask this House, how can the member opposite have it both ways? The member cannot ask for increased spending in our health care system and promote ways to reduce the province's revenues. Increased programs and services cost money, and that of course will often mean higher taxes. The member from Whitby-Oshawa plans to lower the tax rate while balancing the budget in an unbalanced, unfair way which would put our health care system at risk. Quality health care costs money.

I want to make sure that I am saying quite clearly that while we do support this motion, I do have concerns about how the member opposite plans on paying for it, and I do want to point out to the members here that we are on track and we do have a plan to transform the system and make sure that we are paying for the services that we want to increase. The member from Whitby-Oshawa's plan just doesn't add up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to rise in support of the member from Whitby-Oshawa, and certainly for her constituent Mr. McEwen, for better health care in the province of Ontario. I heard the members from the government tell a tale today about how we don't have enough money to provide quality health care in the province of Ontario. That is a shame because their number one duty and obligation should be to provide positive health care coverage in this province.

Their second obligation should be to ensure we have quality education in this province. In order to do that, this government should understand that the best way for us to provide Ontarians with good health is to ensure that our province has good fiscal health.

Just two days ago, this government announced that instead of reducing their deficit to \$10.5 billion, it grew by almost half a billion dollars to \$10.9 billion. I'm going to tell you what the implications are for what the government has done, Speaker.

I'm sure you'll be interested to know that the third-largest spending priority of this Liberal government, outside of health care and education, Mr. McEwen, is servicing the debt and the deficit. So when the members opposite, over there, speak to you and say there is no money to provide health care for you—they like this as a noble idea—what they're really trying to say is that that dollar they are taking away from your health care to fund the debt and the deficit is more important to them because they want to continue to spend on other things.

In fact, what this government wants to do—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is the tradition, convention and rules of this place that we address the Speaker and not talk directly to people in the gallery.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'd also like to speak to the people at home—the audience—and those in the gallery, because I believe that is who sent me to Queen's Park and that is whom I am accountable to.

If the Liberal government is too ashamed to speak directly to the people of this province because of their rapidly increasing debt and deficit and their inability to properly fund health care in the province, that's their problem. It's not the member for Whitby-Oshawa's problem, it's not my problem and it certainly should never be Mr. McEwen's problem.

I'll tell you another thing, Speaker, when I hear the members opposite talk about priorities: If this isn't a priority, I don't know what is.

Let's talk about the sunshine list. It was released a week ago yesterday.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to stick to the bill.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am, Speaker, because we're talking about health care funding. I'll tell you directly what I said to CUPE just last week. For the first time in Ontario's history, over 100,000 people are making over \$100,000 on the public payroll. It has grown by 14%—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member: I'd like you to speak to the motion that's in front of us.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll speak to health care and how this is impacted, if you'll allow me, Speaker.

Here is the direct challenge: The more people who are making more money on that list during a wage freeze or a wage envelope freeze means there will be cuts in services. So as we're talking here today about trying to fund another part of our health care continuum, this is a Liberal government that not only has not contributed to this; they have fired nurses at CHEO—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have great respect for the ability of my colleague opposite, but standing order 23(b)(i) mandates her to speak to the motion, not to something that the motion affects.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I have spoken to the member, and I believe she's back on track.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think I have always been on track when I talk about necessary in-year savings in order to provide Mr. McEwen with the health care he deserves and the health care that the member from Whitby-Oshawa is fighting for. That said, this is a Liberal government that doesn't like to hear that they're failing the people of this province with respect to health care.

But don't worry. My voice will continue to speak loudly, strongly and proudly in opposition to this government. The louder they speak and the more they try to shut us down, I'm going to stand here and remind them of

their failings. I'll remind them of how they're not delivering on their promise and their commitment to the people of this province, and I'll remind them—I will remind them each and every day—of how they are failing Mr. McEwen, and how they have consistently failed Mr. McEwen.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I will continue to listen to the insults of the members opposite. When the member in the back row there someday advances to the front row before the age of 40, just like I did, I'll encourage him to have as much fun as I am here today.

But I'm going to cede my time to the member for Dufferin—Caledon, who will speak directly of her experience of her mother having a stroke. I think that's important, ladies and gentlemen of this chamber and people watching at home, because this is actually impacting real people; not just Mr. McEwen, but many others. When this government doesn't take its fiscal health seriously, they don't take seriously the health of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on the motion from the member from Whitby—Oshawa. Let me begin by thanking the member opposite for bringing the motion in, because this particular issue is very dear to my heart as a former registered nurse, but also as someone who taught rehabilitation nursing for a number of years. So I totally understand what the member opposite is trying to do in terms of improving health care along the system.

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In my very short period of time, I want to remind the audience watching and also here in the chamber of what the government has been doing in the area of awareness and prevention, because at the end of the day, the focus is not just on after you have a stroke; the focus is always finding out how to prevent the stroke—like Bill 45, which we just passed this afternoon, making that particular bill go to committee. The government has been doing a lot of work on stroke prevention. Advertisement of the awareness campaign in the community since last year, a four-month campaign targeting awareness and the whole issue of early intervention in stroke prevention is a good thing to do. Yes, more needs to be done.

The other piece is that I just want to remind the member opposite as well as those watching that last year, we also put additional funding on select stroke services funded through quality-based procedures. We're updating the stroke clinical handbook. More importantly, we have recently announced the expansion of physiotherapy.

The conversation is on the shifting of the health care dollars. I know the member from Welland keeps talking about cuts in the hospitals. Let's all remember there's evidence-based demonstrations that funding through the

community is the right thing to do. Anybody who says more money must be in the acute care setting—it's the wrong message. There's enough evidence that health care must be delivered closest to the patient in the community. There's evidence that talks about that. There's evidence that shows that we have expanded physiotherapy across the province through community services.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm not a health care practitioner. I'm not a doctor. I've never worked in the health care industry. But as my colleague said, my mom had a stroke, and I was a family advocate, as we all are when our family members or friends go through those health care challenges. I understand that rehab is absolutely critical.

This resolution is a resolution about fairness. What we offer to people who have a stroke under the age of 20 and what we offer the people who have a stroke over the age of 64 is not the same as what is available to people who are 20 to 64. That, to me, is ultimately about fairness.

I'll pick on my mother because she's not here, and I'm pretty sure I'm okay—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Never pick on your mother. She'll pick back at you.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Mum was a fairly stubborn—I'm sorry; I mean determined—woman. After her stroke, we had a lot of conversations with the health care advisers, who said, "Rehab will bring her back with the quality of life that she wants, that she expects." That determination and the rehab meant that she was able to be part of our family, part of our relationships for a lot more years to come.

Women of a certain age have beautiful cursive writing. I don't know if you've ever seen it, but they were taught beautiful cursive writing in school. I couldn't tell the difference between my mom's and all of her sisters' because they all had this beautiful cursive writing. You know what? After rehab, she got that back. That meant so much to her and so much to us as family.

I understand how rehab is so important and why this resolution talks to that fairness. Speaker, my time is up, so thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like you to humour me on a point of order recognizing that we have some of the Vanthof children here with their dad, John Vanthof.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order, but we welcome them here.

I now recognize the member for Whitby—Oshawa. You have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Christine Elliott: This has been a really interesting conversation this afternoon. I really do appreciate all of the members who spoke in favour of this motion. The members from the third party: Thank you very much. The members from the Liberal Party: Even though it was pretty backhanded and reluctant, thank you for the support on this.

I would really like to thank Jim McEwen for being here today, for all of the work that he's doing on behalf of the Durham Region Stroke Recovery Group and for his provincial advocacy. I'd also like to thank Lorraine McEwen, his wife, for all the work that she has done to help him in his efforts to achieve full rehabilitation. You're both wonderful. Thank you so much for being here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would just submit to you that this is a win-win proposition for the people of Ontario. It's important that we make sure that we expand post-stroke rehabilitation services so that people can live happy and productive lives. It's good for them and it's good for their families, but it's also good for the province of Ontario. It helps boost our economy and helps people get back into the workforce.

The member from Burlington suggested that I should come up with some ideas about how we can find those in-house savings. Well, I'm happy to oblige. Let's start by not spending a billion dollars of taxpayers' money on cancelled gas plants to make sure that a few Liberal members could get elected. Let's not spend hundreds of millions of dollars on consultants to create a situation where we can build electronic medical records that may never happen. And let's not spend money on building Ornge air ambulances that cannot safely transport passengers. Let's stop doing that, and I'm pretty sure we're going to be able to find the savings that we need to be able to provide these vital services to the people of Ontario.

I really hope that what we will be able to do is to concentrate on spending money on things like making sure we have the nurses we need in our hospitals, making sure that people have diagnostic test strips like diabetes test strips, and making sure that people have access to essential post-stroke rehabilitation services.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' business has expired.

AFFIRMING SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'AFFIRMATION DE L'ORIENTATION SEXUELLE ET DE L'IDENTITÉ SEXUELLE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 77, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 regarding efforts to change or direct sexual orientation or gender identity. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

MAGNA CARTA DAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE JOUR DE LA GRANDE CHARTE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Munro has moved second reading of Bill 23, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Mrs. Munro?

Mrs. Julia Munro: The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Agreed? So ordered.

POST-STROKE RECOVERY SERVICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 43. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

AFFIRMING SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'AFFIRMATION DE L'ORIENTATION SEXUELLE ET DE L'IDENTITÉ SEXUELLE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. It'll be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1629 to 1634.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would members please return to their seats?

Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 77, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, regarding efforts to change or direct sexual orientation or gender identity. All those in favour please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Elliott, Christine

Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Milzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
McGarry, Kathryn

McMahon, Eleanor
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to the committee—Ms. DiNovo?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the justice policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the justice policy committee. Agreed? Agreed. So ordered.

Orders of the day. The deputy government House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Reluctant as I am to do so, and much as I'd like to see us debate bills until 6 o'clock, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I want to wish everyone a happy Easter. This House stands adjourned until Monday, April 13, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1637.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecek

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecek

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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